

TOP STORY: THE SENATE'S PORK-O-RAMA
October 31 - November 13, 1994

In THE SET TIMES

the alternative newsmagazine

election '94

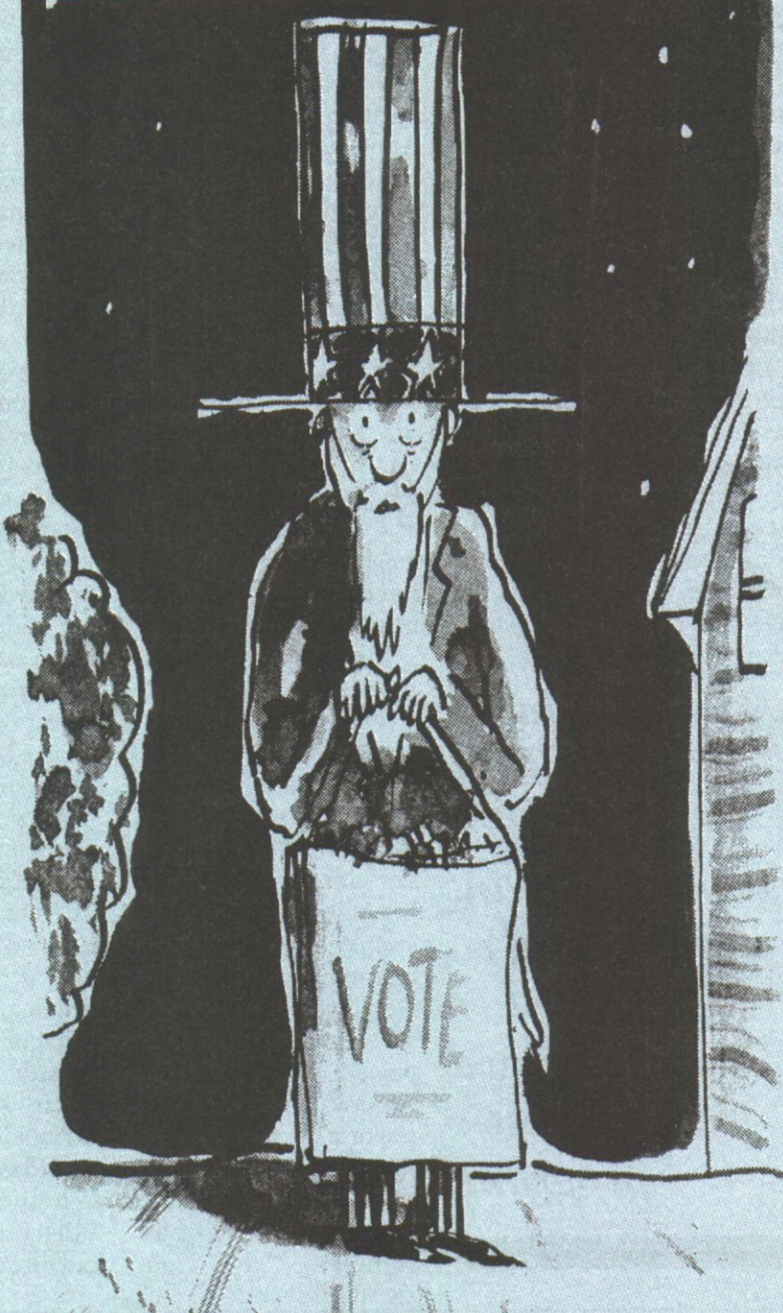
MORE TRICKS THAN TREATS

David Moberg on the decline
of the Democrats, **page 14**

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in Vermont, **page 6**
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EDITORIAL

SADDAM HUSSEIN'S MISSTEP SETS TRAP FOR CLINTON

Saddam Hussein may have sent Iraqi troops toward the Kuwaiti border believing that President Clinton, having his hands full with Haiti—and with an American public in no mood for yet another foreign adventure—would be unable to respond in kind. If so, he badly misunderstood Clinton's situation, just as he had misread President Bush in 1990. Although Bush had sold arms to Iraq just prior to its 1990 invasion of Kuwait, Hussein wrongly assumed that the United States would offer no resistance.

Indeed, after reinstalling Jean-Bertrand Aristide—a move opposed by the right-wing establishment and by an American public kept sublimely ignorant about the history of U.S.-Haiti relations—Clinton had no choice but to face Hussein down. In the political context created by the Gulf War and the demonization of Iraq, a tough response was imperative for a president under attack for his weakness and indecision. In Iraq, Clinton could act decisively with full support from the media, and even from Republicans who savor the U.S. role of world policeman. Anything less than a forceful response would have been a political disaster in this election season.

*Clinton
had to flex
U.S. muscles
against Hussein,
but in doing so
he further
undermined
his domestic
program.*

But like the right's near hysteria last spring over North Korea's efforts to develop a nuclear bomb, Clinton's response to Hussein's provocation had little to do with the security of the American people and even less to do with promoting democracy worldwide. Both were all about image and power. The Korean crisis saw Clinton acting responsibly while atavistic Cold War hawks howled for blood and painted the president as spineless. The Iraq

affair, on the other hand, was Clinton's time to stand tall. But in so doing, he necessarily gave aid and comfort to militant advocates of a new imperial world order—the worthies who over the last half year have seized on every international incident to escalate their campaign to increase military spending.

Now, Hussein's muscle-flexing in southern Iraq has provided the Pentagon, the media and assorted arms industry lackeys the opportunity for a frontal assault.

Talk about the Pentagon's two-war strategy, which says the military should be prepared to fight two major wars at the same time, is now all the rage. Retired and active duty generals, military think tanks, Pentagon retainers at prestigious universities and congressional servants of the arms industry are mounting a two-pronged attack on behalf of more military spending. First, they are saying that the United States does not have the capacity to fight two major wars at once, and therefore we need to spend more money. Second, they are decrying the use of our military forces for humanitarian efforts like those in Rwanda and Haiti because they drain our allegedly inadequate resources and threaten the safety of our warriors.

In order to make the first argument, of course, the generals and their sponsors in industry have to resort to fantasy. They have to imply that the occupation of Haiti and the sending of 40,000 or more troops to Kuwait fit their definition of major military operations, and that the Pentagon is straining under the burden. Neither implication is true. In addition, they have to argue that both Korea and Iraq actually represent potential threats of major war—or that there is some other potential threat of equal or greater magnitude. None of this is true. North Korea may have the technical capacity to invade South Korea, but to do so would be military and political suicide. The United States has 50,000 troops stationed in the South, which itself has 16 times the GDP of the North and twice the population—and little or no fear of the North. In fact, the South feels secure enough to have held back new military spending this year in order to build a second fast train line.

As for Iraq, it took the United States less than a week to destroy its ability to fight. Since then Iraq's army has continued to deteriorate.

Even if one accepts the idea that the United States should be world policeman—an assumption we strongly oppose—there is clearly no need for the current level of military spending, much less for more. But the right, aided by the Pentagon and Democratic senators favored by the arms industry, is making a push to return to the Reagan days of military Keynesianism. This is a way to subsidize corporate profitability without giving anything to the American people. Indeed, every increase in the military budget mandates a decrease in social spending.

Clinton is already caught in this trap. His latest move in Iraq threatens to make escape more difficult. ◀

IN THESE TIMES

"...with liberty and justice for all"

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(ISSN 0160-6992)

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This issue (Vol. 18, No. 25) published October 31, 1994 for newsstand sales October 31 - November 13, 1994.



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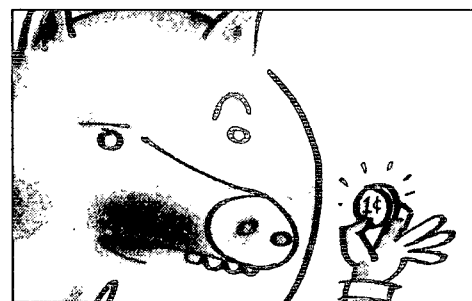
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L E T T E R S

Outrageously irresponsible

I just read Pat Dowell's review of *Natural Born Killers*, Oliver Stone's latest work (*ITT*, September 5). A chillingly on-target statement in Dowell's rave says, "Let's face it, many people don't know a parody when they see one." It was ever thus. Impressionable people, not just kids, emulate this asshole behavior and end up dead in the gutter. The argument whether art imitates life or the other way around is moot.

What matters is that real feelings and impressions of life are powerfully portrayed in the media and are perceived as factual. This distortion is contributing heartily to the demise of our society and creating a fantasy replacement where people live their lives as figments of someone else's imagination. Outrageously irresponsible.

James A. McManus
Hainesport, N.J.

No time?

Chris Vail in "Nixing Nixon" (*Letters*, October 3) displays his own "lack of perspective on population issues." I would not for a moment disagree with the need for resource redistribution,

World autocracy

This morning I read Will Nixon's review of *Mortgaging the Earth* (*ITT*, September 19). Nixon reminds us that the Bank makes crucial decisions about the economy and ecology of the world without democratic accountability.

The Bank was supposed to bring technical expertise solely to narrow problems. Democratic control was, we were told, not possible because the problems were so hard to understand, and not appropriate because the solutions were technical and value-free—and not necessarily because authority was strictly limited.

Yesterday I read an article by C. Douglas Lummis in *The Nation* called

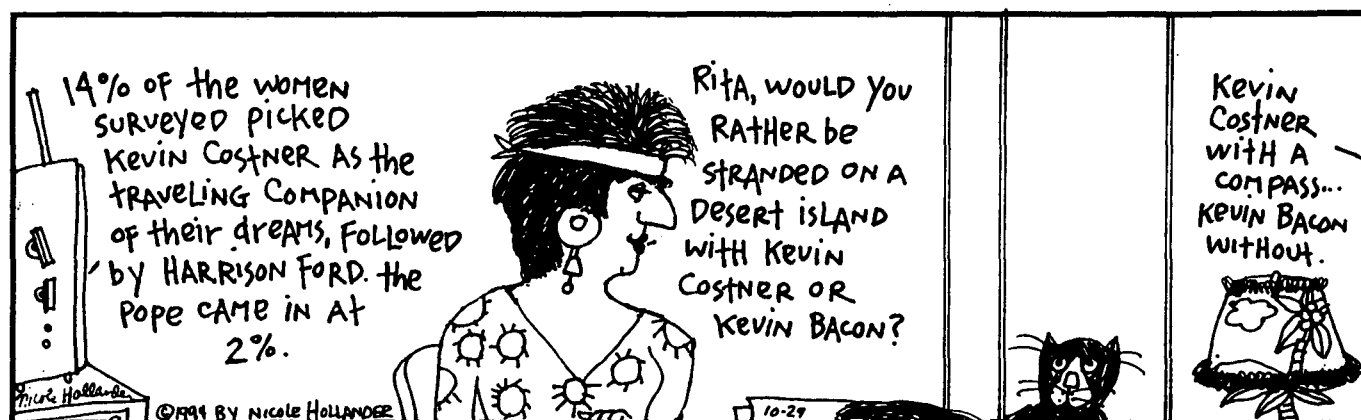
"Globocop?: Time to Watch the Watchers." Lummis warned that the U.N.'s International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia is generating international criminal law by punishing human rights violators without legislative guidelines.

Then there's GATT. An integrating world economy increasingly needs world government. That world government is, I fear, coming into being—without, as Lummis notes, the consent of the governed; without, as Nixon notes, democratic controls; accountable, as both suggest, only to the highest levels of corporate power.

Joseph Schuman
Chicago

SYLVIA

by Nicole Hollander



and for Americans in particular to surrender a good deal of our wasteful lifestyle. However, Vail makes an entirely erroneous assumption in saying that "the Earth can support 10 billion people at current resource consumption." The Earth may support them for a short time, but can it sustain them? If you put 10 cows into a fenced one-acre pasture, and when they have eaten half, say, "Well, a one-acre pasture will support 10 cows," you are being incredibly short-sighted. This is to say nothing of all of the rest of God's creatures who are entitled to their own place on Earth.

The "experts" are not to be held to such specific numbers, nor have attributed to them such notions as a desire to "maintain the current discrepancy in consumption." They are simply drawing attention to a problem of great magnitude and complexity, and suggesting a direction to proceed. The direction is important, not the numbers. We haven't time to limit resource consumption and then talk about population control. We need to exercise both approaches now.

Rod Brown
Cambridge, N.Y.

Presidential Leadership

Your editorial "An Ambiguous First Step in Haiti" (*ITT*, October 3) is really not as ambiguous as you indicated.

The FRAPH militia that Lt. Gen. Cédras used to storm the Presidential Palace was formed by Emmanuel Constant at the urging, and with the assistance, of the CIA. The militia was initially intended to counterbalance the rising popularity of Father Jean-Bertrand Aristide's movement. Constant has long been on the CIA payroll, as recently reported in *The Nation*.

If President Clinton was not sincere in his stated objective to return democracy to Haiti he need only have

allowed Congress to debate the issue. There was widespread opposition to such an invasion by the American public, Congress, the CIA, the business lobbies and the American military hierarchy. However, in the face of such opposition he chose to proceed. This took political courage and moral commitment. The successful mission of Carter-Nunn-Powell to force the Haitian military to abdicate and thus turn an invasion into a "friendly occupation" is an act of extraordinary presidential leadership.

Hal Kleinman
Chair, Democrats Abroad
Munich

Whitening

"The Greening of New Mexico" (*ITT*, September 19) was as disturbing as it was interesting. Perhaps a more eloquent Jesse Jackson-type statement would be "The Whitening of Minorities." The first cultural "nuking" occurs when the author tries to set a mood with the translation of a *dicho*, a traditional Hispanic folk saying. If she were literate in Spanish, she would have noticed that the English translation was wrong. The direct English translation should have been: "A tree growing twisted will never straighten its twig." It might be a subtlety to some, but to most the crux of his offering was lost on illiterate reporting. He actually was offering up a point about not expecting the straight and narrow from a "twisted" system. To pursue the other translation would be to imply that the two parties were "crooked" from the git-go. Although some argument may be made about that, it is not congruent with the implicity of his message. If *In These Times* had someone editing on board with Spanish proficiency they would have seen this.

The second problem occurs immediately afterward in the quote, "In a state where native Hispanic, American Indian and Anglo populations coexist..." The native here in North Amer-

ica is the American Indian. And I have yet to see coexistence anywhere.

Finally, the third-party candidacy of Mondragon, although long overdue, does little to allay the fears I have about the right gaining legitimacy through third-party endeavors. In this country we have libertarians who are the sons of Republicans and the grandsons of conservative Democrats. Whenever the rabble starts to get too close, they simply form another group. Thus far, any argument for "deficit reduction without 'deep cuts' in domestic spending" could be seen as another kinder, gentler form of fiscal Bushismo. The same thing goes for term limits.

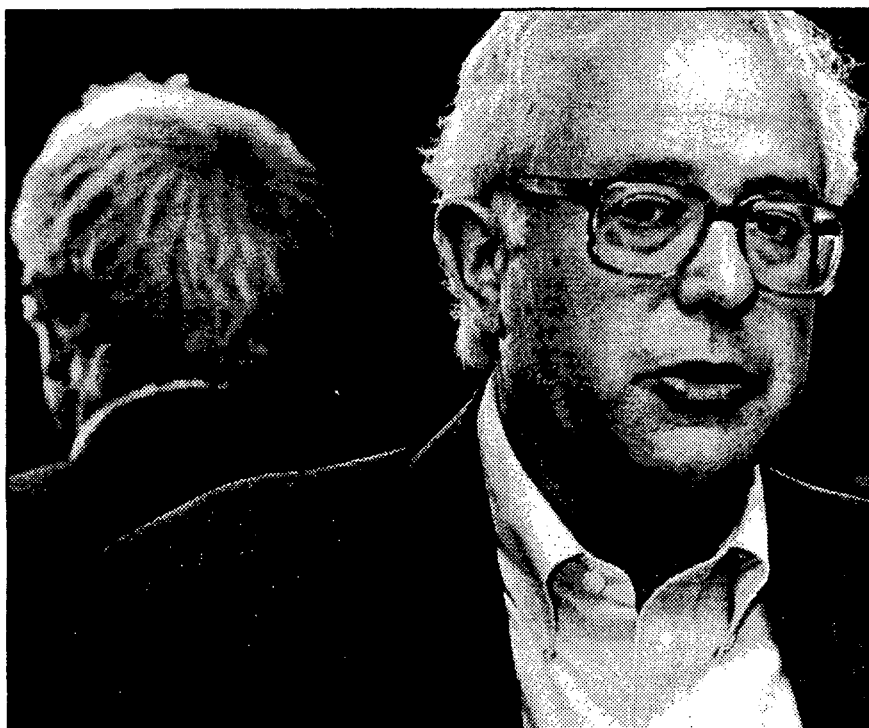
Jose Refugio Garcia
San Antonio, Texas

Editor's note: In New Mexico, "native Hispanics" refers to the descendants of the population that lived in the area before it was incorporated into the United States after the Mexican-American war. Although in recent years many of these people have identified themselves as Mexicans, many more insist that they are Spanish. Thus the unfortunate use of the term Hispanics. Also, a cursory reading of the article reveals that the translation of the dicho in question was provided by Mondragon.

Correction

Because of last-minute editorial complications, Frank Kofsky's article on the armaments industry (*ITT*, October 3) was published without giving the author an opportunity to approve the changes we made. Kofsky finds those changes wholly unacceptable, and we greatly regret having caused him distress in this regard. He asks that readers not judge his writing on the basis of the article that appeared below his byline in these pages.

InSHORT



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BYE, BYE BERNIE?

Bye, Bye Bernie," proclaim the bumper stickers that, at times, seem more ubiquitous in Vermont this autumn than the red tint of turning maple leaves.

The slogan is part of the National Rifle Association's effort to defeat Bernie Sanders, who's running scared in his race for re-election to Congress. Local gun-ownership advocates, having earlier worked against a Sanders opponent, are now incensed with the congressman because of his votes for the Clinton crime bill, which contains a provision banning certain assault weapons. Sanders' consistent opposition to handgun control legislation has not mollified hard-core fans of firearms.

But the "Bye Bye Bernie" sentiment is shared by many unarmed Vermonters as well. They want Sanders out of office because of his professed socialist views.



Messiah world tour '94

More and more visitors to the Holy Land seem to think they've come bearing the Word of God, according to Yair Bar-El, director of the Kfar Shaul psychiatric hospital, who has treated nearly



500 sufferers of "Jerusalem syndrome" in recent years. Many of the would-be

prophets have histories of mental illness. Others, the Associated Press has reported, were "regular tourists who suddenly donned hotel sheets or other makeshift clothing and took to the streets, preaching repentance, forgiveness and peace." Meanwhile, in the small town of Fostoria, Ohio, the image of Jesus has appeared—for the third time in less than a decade—on the side of a giant soybean oil storage tank. "It's real," one onlooker told the AP. "It looks something like me, but I've always had long hair and a beard."

The spirit of capitalism

Rep. Newt Gingrich (R-GA) has been spicing up the lec-

tures in the college course he teaches with glowing references to the course's financial



backers, the Washington newspaper *Roll Call* reports. And, during a lecture on the

"Spirit of Invention and Discovery" for his Reinhart college course, Gingrich took the hucksterism a step further, airing a promotional video for Scientific Atlanta, a maker of satellite dishes that had donated \$2,500 to help finance the course. Who says education doesn't pay?

Dear diary...

A 12-year-old girl who had accused her father of sexual abuse was led away in handcuffs after she refused to turn over her diary to a Florida



judge, according to wire service reports. Circuit judge Robert Carney, who has since

withdrawn from the case, suggested that the girl was acting like a child who "was spanked and now she doesn't like the judge."

Stunned by a stupid statement? Nauseated by a noxious news item? Livid about a ludicrous lie? Contact the Appall-O-Meter, 2040 N. Milwaukee, Chicago, IL 60647

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9. Zhirinovskyesque
10. Where have you gone, Joe Goebbels?

Even though he has twice won election to Congress and was a four-term mayor of Vermont's biggest city, Sanders remains vulnerable to an effective mainstream challenge, owing to his class-conflict rhetoric and the fact that he cannot rely on organized party support. Sanders' insecurity is compounded this year by the generalized disgust with all office-holders. While not as virulent as in other parts of the country, anti-incumbency fever has apparently affected at least some Vermont voters.

Sanders has tried to turn this mood to his advantage by emphasizing his status as the sole independent member of Congress. Casting himself as an outsider after four years in Washington is no easy task, however. Indeed, Sanders must now fend off charges—leveled by *Nation* columnist Alexander Cockburn and others—that he is just another careerist hack.

The contradictions are heightened by Sanders' simultaneous need to convince Vermonters that, as their sole representative in the U.S. House, he is able to function effectively within the congressional power structure.

This somewhat awkward situation has not been fully exploited by Sanders' main foe, Republican John Carroll. In his first statewide race, Carroll is cautiously voicing traditional conservative themes. The 51-year-old majority leader of the state senate paints Sanders as a tax-and-spend ally of Bill Clinton. One of Carroll's TV ads contrasts his own call for a business-employee health care "partnership" with Sanders' advocacy of a single-payer system, which is depicted as a high-tax, big-government scheme.

But Carroll has not yet offered many reasons why Vermonters should vote for him—as opposed to voting against Sanders. The challenger still suffers from limited name recognition, partly because he has so far failed to fashion a positive, engaging message.

Sanders is having trouble of his own, however, in persuading Vermonters that he deserves another term. Campaign spokeswoman Jane O'Meara Sanders, the congressman's wife, acknowledges "a communications problem" in this regard. Conceding that little is known of her husband's achievements in Washington during the past four years, she says that Sanders' policy of largely spurning his congressional franking privilege has proven to be "a mistake, in terms of political expediency."

About 85 percent of Sanders' government-supplied budget for mass mailings to constituents has gone unspent. This frugal approach reflects the congressman's belief that it is somehow offensive to tout his record by regularly sending newsletters to Vermont households.

If voters know anything at all of Sanders' accomplishments in Washington, their awareness is probably limited to his efforts to ban hazardous chemicals in carpets. Although this fairly well-publicized initiative led to a larger success in controlling indoor air pollution, Bernie's carpet crusade has served more as a source of humor in Vermont than as a sign of the congressman's legislative acumen.

Sanders also points to his role in safeguarding a benefits package for children that was nearly removed from Clinton's budget. He takes credit, too, for passage of amendments that expand affordable housing opportunities.

Perhaps his most significant achievement was initiating legislation that enables states to establish cancer registries. As a result of this measure, possible environmental causes of cancer can now be studied more effectively.

Vermonters are also being urged to return Sanders to Washington on the grounds that his philosophy of politics is radically different from the standard version. Don't look to me as a savior, Sanders consistently tells audiences—

you've got to actively fight for your own interests.

"He's a grass-roots organizer," is how Jane Sanders puts it. "He has helped give the left a voice in Congress."

Despite published polls showing Sanders with a comfortable lead, some top campaign strategists fear that he may well lose this race. On all their minds is the unexpected defeat suffered a year and a half ago by Peter Clavelle, Sanders' successor as Progressive Coalition mayor of Burlington. In that upset, a nondescript Republican took advantage of the Progressives' fatigue and complacency, while galvanizing voters around a single issue.

It was gay rights then. And it could turn out to be gun control this time.

—Kevin J. Kelley

GIULIANI'S DIVISION OF LABOR

Some 1,000 lawyers employed by the private, non-profit Legal Aid Society ended a two-day walkout October 5 after New York Mayor Rudolph Giuliani terminated the city's \$79 million contract with the society, which provides legal services to the poor. Giuliani warned the lawyers that they would never again do city-funded work if they didn't go back.

Giuliani's hard-line stance with the Legal Aid strikers sets a high-profile precedent for other cities seeking tougher contracts with public workers. Union representatives fear that Giuliani's action—which may have violated labor laws—will exacerbate the national trend of service cuts and layoffs of local government workers.

"The mayor has brought Reaganism to this city," says Arthur Cheliotas, president of the Communications Workers of America Local 1180, which represents municipal administrative employees. "Giuliani was happy to say he was part of Reagan's efforts to bust PATCO," Cheliotas continues, recalling the mayor's support for the firing of U.S. air traffic controllers that took place while he was the number three official at the Reagan Justice Department.

By breaking the legal aid strike, Giuliani weakened the negotiating position of New York's municipal unions, making it tougher for them to protect members' jobs and city services already hurt by the mayor's budget cuts. Facing a \$1 billion budget gap, the city is demanding a wage freeze, worker contributions to health costs and workforce reductions.

Cheliotas blasts the mayor's "failure to look at the revenue side of the budget." He cites a recent New York Times poll showing that 46 percent of New Yorkers are willing to pay higher taxes to avoid laying off city workers. Only 28 percent are opposed. "Cuts in social services cost the city even in the short run," Cheliotas says, maintaining that cutting staff increases administrative errors that result in state and federal financial penalties.

The elimination of 6,000 jobs earlier this year through a city buyout program has jeopardized foster children, shortened many agencies' office hours and forced city residents to wait longer for everything from birth certificates to housing inspections. That's according to Joe DePlasco, a spokesperson for Mark Green, the city's elected public advocate. It has

MEDIA BEAT

By Pat Aufderheide

True and Clear

Marketers are reaching way far for concepts to cut through advertising clutter. Last year it was the "clear" sensation (your dish detergent, your shampoo, your soft drink, your beer), in which timeworn products tried to look transparently honest, clean and pure. Now comes the "true" trend, with Amex's True Grace credit card, AT&T's TrueVoice, True Rewards and other, related Trues. In fact, "true" is the latest fad word, according to a research firm's results reported in *Advertising Age*. In broadcast advertising this year, the word has recurred 493 times compared with last year's 441—and we're not even done with 1994. The danger, as ad execs see it? Contributing further to entrenched consumer cynicism.

Mad as Heck

Ted Turner has always been the bad boy of broadcasters, a guy who keeps forgetting he's a junior member of the old boys' club and that all that talk about free and open competition is for the viewing public. At a recent speech at the National Press Club in Washington, D.C., he denounced Time Warner for blocking his recent attempt to purchase NBC—a purchase that he believes is essential to letting him compete in the entertainment-conglomerate game.

It happened like this. Time and Warner were both on the board he formed a decade ago when

Turner Broadcasting nearly went bankrupt. When Time and Warner merged, the new company ended up with three seats and increased clout. Since Time Warner is now interested in buying a network, they used their clout on the Turner board to block the deal.

"I tried to be a good partner," complained Turner to attendees. "When [Time Warner] told me not to buy Home Shopping Network, I said OK." Similarly, with Financial News Network. But now, Turner says, they're crippling him in his effort to "compete with Rupert Murdoch, who has his own studio ... his own broadcast network ... his own cable network." He thinks "it's like fighting a war without an air force" or even like "being clitorized." Industry trades immediately reported the shocking news that Turner knew what a clitoridectomy is.

Power behind the Throne

Fox Broadcasting has given minority-controlled companies \$20 million to purchase television stations that will then affiliate with Fox.

Fox has already dropped \$100 million to fund other minority and non-minority stand-ins, and ABC has also struck up "surrogate" arrangements. Why are networks and groups so eager to fund others—especially legally favored minorities—to buy stations? Because the FCC limits the total number of stations a single entity can own or even control. Funders have been careful to purchase non-voting stock, making their investment safe from regulators.

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been difficult, says DePlasco, to document the full impact of the cuts because city agencies have resisted Green's requests for information. The mayor is seeking to eliminate 7,600 more jobs.

The National Labor Relations Board is investigating whether the mayor violated federal law by intervening in the dispute between the lawyers and Legal Aid management. Legal Aid Society Executive Director Archibald Murray, involved in talks to salvage city funding for his organization, would not comment on the mayor's actions.

Although the Legal Aid lawyers won slight improvements over management's pre-strike contract offer, many of them will be out of a job if the mayor carries out his continuing threat to end Legal Aid's role as the primary provider of representation to low-income clients. Terminating the society's services would not only harm the lawyers. As Association of Legal Aid Attorneys President Michael Letwin says, "it doesn't make sense economically" for the city either. Just last June Giuliani's own administration recommended using Legal Aid to represent almost all poor defendants because it provides better, cheaper representation than private attorneys assigned at city expense. Letwin speculates that cutting Legal Aid could be an attempt by Giuliani, a former prosecutor, to weaken representation for poor defendants.

The unions bear some responsibility for the corner they are in. The biggest municipal union, the 130,000-member District Council 37 of the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees, has not challenged the mayor or his plans publicly, and its leaders were noticeably absent from the striking lawyers' City Hall press conference. But Letwin acknowledges that the lawyers' union didn't do enough groundwork with the municipal unions before going out. He also says administration officials warned him not to strike because the mayor would come down on the union, yet he says the attorneys were "taken aback by the forcefulness and fierceness of the attack."

—Chris Seymour

ROUGH CUTS

By JA Reid

Shrink Rap #37



I N P E R S O N

TODAY'S CARTOONIST

Tom Tomorrow

Cartoonist Dan Perkins—better known as Tom Tomorrow—expresses a disdain for politicians that is matched only by his bemused fascination with them.

"When someone like Dan Quayle decides to run for president, I'm of two minds," he says. "If he won, as a person I'd be horrified. As a cartoonist, I'd be dancing in the streets."

Since 1984, Perkins, 33, has taken on the social and political hypocrisy of our time, from reckless consumerism to vapid network news to Rush Limbaugh to White House doublespeak. His weekly cartoon strip, "This Modern World," runs in 80 papers around the country, and has appeared in major media outlets such as the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post*.

Perkins, who lives in San Francisco, is now on the road selling his second book of cartoons, *Tune in Tomorrow* (St. Martin's Press). The Iowa native and his traveling slide show draw standing-room-only crowds at bookstores in northern California and Oregon. At a thin 6-foot-2, Perkins has a boyish face with sunken eyes. His flat, dry voice carries the same droll sarcasm that characterizes his cartoons.

He is different from most editorial cartoonists because of the unabashed bias of his work. "I sure as hell bring opinions to it," he says. Perkins' strip is word-heavy. He contrasts vacant remarks from news anchors and politicians with biting commentary from a visor-wearing penguin named Sparky. A self-taught artist, Perkins takes images from old advertisements and magazines and, with the help of a copy machine and ink pen, merges them into a four-panel cartoon.

"Sparky says all of the things that you wish you could say but are too sedated to say," says Anthony Barreiro, a 34-year-old social worker attending Perkins' slide show in Berkeley, Calif. "Artistically, I really like how he takes images and recycles them. He takes something that we're comfortable with and makes us uncomfortable with it."

"He has a wry sense of humor," says Stan Klezmer, 62, a retired researcher from Lawrence Berkeley Laboratory. "I grew up reading *The New Yorker* in the '50s for the same reason—a lot of insight."

Despite its brashness, "This Modern World" has achieved modest mainstream success. The strip began as a feature in *Processed World*, a magazine



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ETC.

By Jim McNeill

Notable and quotable

Every two years, as the congressional election season rolls around, it's always fun to check in on Rep. Bob Dornan (R-CA), whose campaigns consistently produce some of the liveliest—if most ludicrous—political rhetoric in America.

While facing a female opponent in the 1992 primary, the ultra-conservative Dornan insisted that "every lesbian spear-chucker is hoping I get defeated." During that same year, Dornan was asked to explain the checks he'd bounced at the House bank. The congressman, a life-long Catholic, claimed he'd overdrawn his account while building a backyard shrine to the Virgin Mary.

In past races, Dornan's Orange County constituents have lacked a comprehensive guide to their representative's astonishing oratory. But this year, they can turn to "*Shut Up, Fag*," a collection of the most outrageous quotes from Dornan's 16 years in office. Compiled by Nathan Callahan and William Payton, the book provides the best of Dornan's worst.

In a 1985 speech before a conservative audience, Dornan condemned Rep. Tom Downey (D-NY) for opposing U.S. aid to the Nicaraguan contras, calling Downey a "draft-dodging wimp" and a "liar." When Downey later asked his California colleague about the episode, Dornan grabbed the Long Island Democrat by the necktie and screamed, "Stay out of my face, now and forever!"

Although *"Shut Up, Fag"* is only 120 pages long, that's more than enough room to list Dornan's legislative accomplishments—since he has almost none. One of Dornan's most prominent acts was his 1986 sponsorship of a resolution establishing Walt Disney Recognition Day.

In another resolution submitted to Congress in 1986, Dornan condemned the National Education Association (NEA) as a "socialist-humanist progressive network." With its "absolute faith in science and the theory of evolution," Dornan warned, the NEA intends to "convert this Republic into a socialist state."

This far-right Republican—who opposes abortion even when a mother's life is threatened—may not seem the likeliest candidate to lead the nation. But he announced in 1993 that he intends to run in the 1996 Republican presidential primaries. Dornan believes his bedrock commitment to Judeo-Christian principles and family values will distinguish him from the rest of the field.

Unfortunately, for Dornan, family values don't seem to start at home. As *"Shut Up, Fag"* reveals, Dornan's wife, Sallie, has filed for divorce four times during their 39-year marriage.

by and for temporary workers. Perkins first adopted the pen name Tom Tomorrow at that magazine to avoid being blacklisted by employers for whom he temped. The strip now appears mainly in alternative weekly papers, but it has also been picked up by a few major metropolitan dailies.

"We wanted something sort of off-beat," says Kathleen Bailey, editorial page assistant at the *Des Moines Register*, which began running "This Modern World" in 1991. "He causes you to step back and look at things in a different way," she says. According to her, Tom Tomorrow elicits more reader mail (mostly negative) than all the other cartoons. "People feel it's unpatriotic and disloyal," she says. "He's not the typical Iowa viewpoint." The *Register* runs "This Modern World" on the editorial page. ("Doonesbury" is in the comics section.)

Most dailies, however, avoid Tom Tomorrow altogether. It used to run in the *San Francisco Examiner* until Perkins withdrew it after editors censored some of his most controversial strips because they were "not funny."

Having a narrow audience doesn't bother Perkins: "I'm not going to save the world," he says. "So if I'm preaching to the converted, that's fine. I think I'm comforting the afflicted more than afflicting the comforted."

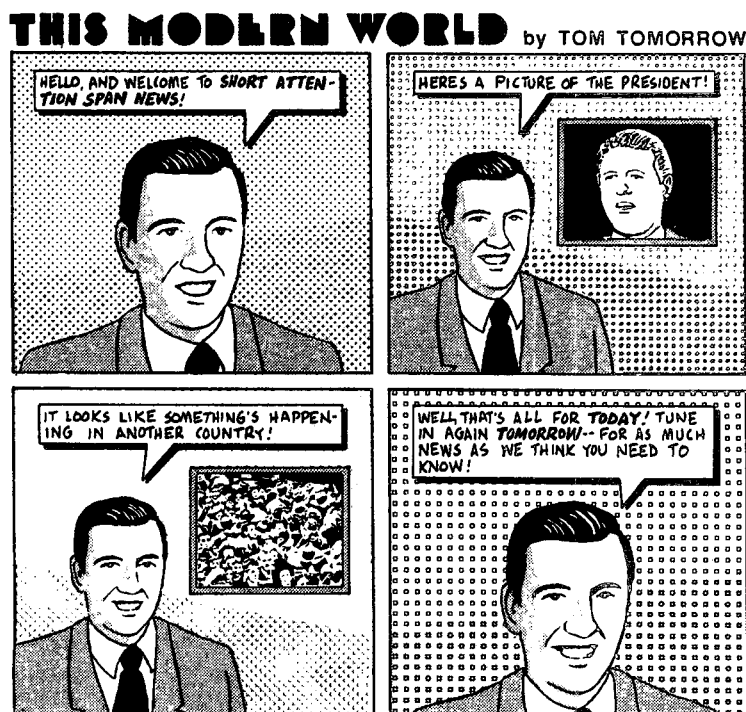
And while he has no mercy for Republicans, Perkins says he holds President Bill Clinton to the same standards of integrity. When Perkins polled readers on their opinions of the president, the response was "an even split between weenie and total sellout."

He has criticized Clinton for indecisiveness, backing down on gay rights and relying on corporate backers. In fact, Perkins drew Clinton as a breakfast waffle seven months before cartoonist Garry Trudeau drew national attention for the same image in "Doonesbury." Perkins is still miffed. "I was afraid people would think I took it from him," he says.

Although it's a challenge to come up with new approaches every week, he never lacks for topics. In addition to politics and the media, Perkins focuses on creeping technologies. He finds it ironic that *Wired* magazine wouldn't take his cartoons because they "didn't look futuristic enough." "I'm one of the only cartoonists doing information-age cartoons," he says. "I'm just not doing it on a computer."

At his slide show in Berkeley, Perkins presented an old advertisement in which a group of friends play dominoes in a futuristic car that drives itself. "There's a trendy notion that technology has no political or social ramifications and we don't have to look where we're going," says Perkins. "I'm not a Luddite, but I think we should keep our hands on the steering wheel."

—Karen Brown



T H E F I R S T S T O N E

JUST WHEN THINGS COULDN'T GET WORSE ...

By Joel Bleifuss

Earlier this month the Senate killed legislation that would have placed some restrictions on the activities of the estimated 90,000 lobbyists who swarm the nation's capital, nibbling at laws, tearing apart regulations and depositing piles of money along the way.

The bill, passed by the House and sponsored in the Senate by Carl Levin (D-MI) and William Cohen (R-ME), contained two key features. It would have banned lobbyists from giving gifts—expensive meals, football tickets, vacation junkets—to members of Congress and their staffs. And it would have required that all people paid more than \$2,500 over a six-month period to influence legislation would have had to register with the government and to provide detailed financial information on who paid them how much to lobby. This provision would have opened to scrutiny the increasingly common practice of “astroturf” lobbying—manufactured expressions of “grass roots” outrage that public relations specialists package and deliver to targeted officials.

Influence-peddling is the largest, most powerful and most unregulated industry in Washington, D.C. Currently, only about 14,000 lobbyists, a fraction of the total, are registered in Washington.

Larry Makinson is the author of *Open Secrets—The Encyclopedia of Congressional Money and Politics*. Produced by the Center for Responsive Politics, this thousand-plus-page encyclopedia is a complete compilation of how much various lobbies gave to which members of Congress. “It was a good bill. It was a tough bill,” says Makinson. “Right now these people have tremendous power in Washington, and most of it is invisible to the public. This bill would have made it much more visible. You would have found out for the first time just how much money Exxon or some other big corporation was pouring into lobbying efforts. And the bill would have exposed astroturf lobbying because it would have required that lobbyists show how much money they are paying to manipulate legislators with these thousands of phone calls to the Hill.”

Public Citizen lobbyist Pamela Gilbert, who worked on the Hill trying to get the bill passed, says very few members of Congress were actually interested in having the bill become law. “It would really have thrown a wrench in how life works around here,” she says. “At a minimum it would have made life more expensive for members of Congress and their staff. It was also a bill that was very difficult to vote against on its merits. A senator can’t stand up and say, ‘I can’t vote to give away my free lunches.’”

What the senators needed was an excuse to oppose the legislation. That pretext was provided by House Minority Whip Newt Gingrich (R-GA), who launched a masterful disinformation cam-

paign against the bill. Gingrich falsely characterized the bill as an “anti-religious” effort to quash grass-roots politics. He warned, incorrectly, that the bill would require all the names of a political organization’s volunteers to be turned over to the federal government. And he falsely claimed that those who violated the law “might go to jail.” In what Gilbert describes as “a stroke of genius,” Gingrich then enlisted the help of the right-wing television triumvirate: crackpot commentator Rush Limbaugh, political strategist Paul Weyrich and Christian demagogue Pat Robertson. Lying through their collective teeth, each went on their respective shows to mobilize listeners to lobby against the bill.

On the *700 Club*, a phone number flashed across the television screen as Robertson called the measure “one of the most shocking attempts to limit your freedom of speech and the rights of Christian people and other groups concerned about the out-of-control government.” Limbaugh characterized the bill as “anti-American and unconstitutional.” And Weyrich told his *Dateline Washington* audience to “stop this monstrosity before it stops you, the citizens of the United States.”

The calls flooded in. The Christian Coalition, through its computerized telephone network, claims to have generated 250,000 calls to Congress.

Says Gilbert: “For members of Congress who were hearing from their constituents, it was the perfect cover to vote against the bill. It was the perfect fix for them—being so close to the end of the session it left us no time to deal with this argument.”

To no one’s surprise, most Senate Republicans voted to kill the lobbying bill. Sen. Cohen, one of the few Republicans to support the bill, argued on the floor of the Senate: “We have thousands of lobbyists in this town. Only a small percentage actually register according to the existing law. Of those few who do, the information they provide is meaningless, it is useless. If we are trying to find out why the people are cynical about the political process, take a look at what happens outside the Finance Committee when it takes up a

tax bill. That corridor is lined with paid professional lobbyists who are paid huge sums of money to lobby on behalf of their clients. The public, we feel, would like to know who is being paid how much to lobby for whom on what issues."

What does money buy? The Center for Responsive Politics' newsletter, *The Capital Eye*, reports that business lobbyist Allen Neece Jr. had reason to lick his chops at a recent \$5,000-a-plate fund-raising dinner for Sen. Paul Sarbanes (D-MD). Neece explained: "I have talked to a lot of senators tonight. It's access. Otherwise you have to stand in line at the Capitol to say thank you to a senator who has walked the plank. This is democracy at its best."

Both Gilbert and Makinson say the Democratic congressional leadership shares a large part of the blame for the bill's failure. The Democrats could have acted on reform measures in 1993, instead of waiting until the last days of the congressional session and facilitating the bill's subsequent failure.

What is certain is that the right knew what it was doing when it killed lobbying reform. At issue was not just a question of good government, but whether corporate interests, through their lobbyists and campaign contributors, would be able to retain their enormous influence over the executive branch and legislative process. In other words, whether money—which the right has tons of—would continue to be allowed to buy elections and politicians.

Paul Weyrich wrote in the early '80s: "The New Right has managed to establish the institutions necessary to have impact on the entirety of the political process. We have within our grasp the mechanisms needed to achieve our goal. That goal is not merely to oppose, but to govern. ... We believe we can achieve this goal, provided the left does not put us out of business before another few years have passed. That is no idle possibility: federal financing of House and Senate campaigns would be a major step in that direction. The elimination of single-issue interest groups, a high priority of the left in the 96th Congress, would be a coup de grace to the New Right coalition."

Newt Gingrich understands this too. Soon after he killed the bill, Gingrich met with 24 high-level Washington lobbyists and told them that the Republican strategy for the mid-term elections was to portray the Democrats as "the enemy of normal Americans." One of the lobbyists in attendance provided detailed notes from that meeting to the *Washington Post*.

At the meeting, Gingrich explained

that if the Republicans gain control of the House of Representatives, he, as the new speaker of the House, would make sure that congressional "subpoena power" is used to launch "20" congressional investigations of Clinton administration corruption.

He also offered the assembled lobbyists three "resource messages" they could use in their effort to raise money for the Republicans. First, rich individuals should be told that contributing to the Republicans was a chance to "get even for the Clinton tax increase." Second, corporate donors should be told that they could bank on future corporate savings, if, in a Republican-controlled House, Rep. Thomas Bliley (R-Va.) were to replace Rep. Henry Waxman (D-CA) as chair of the subcommittee on health and the environment.

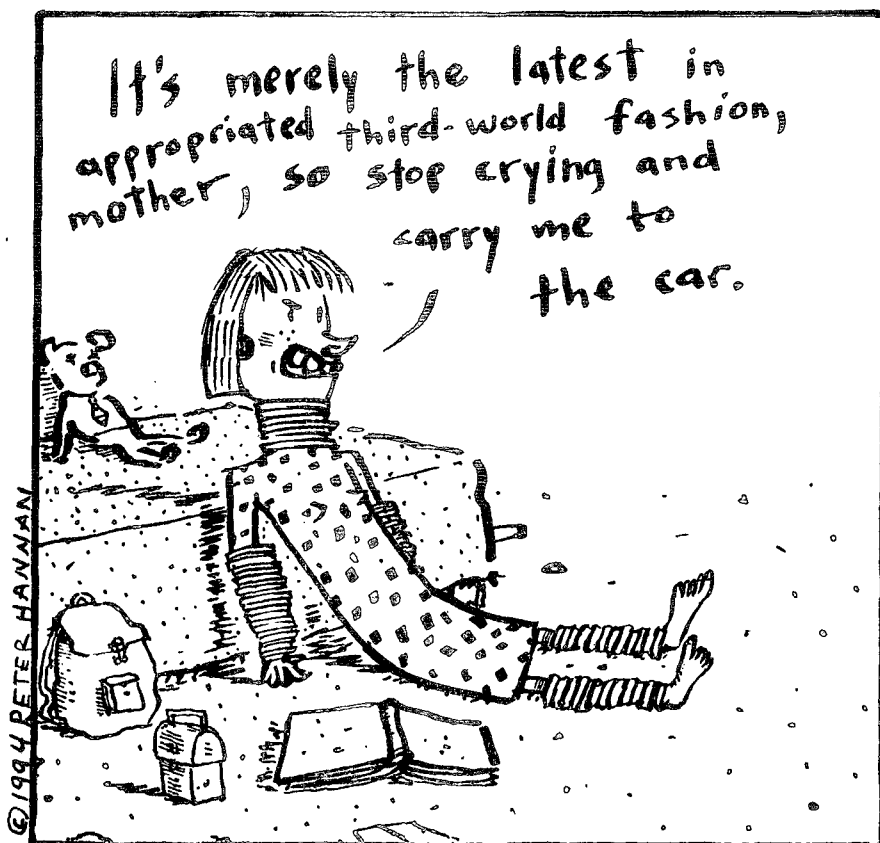
Finally, Gingrich explained to these 24 lobbyists that they could raise money for the GOP from other lobbyists by pointing out that the Democrats were threatening their very livelihood with "Stalinist" attacks on the influence industry. Democratic lobbyists, said Gingrich, "should feel particularly bitter that their friends in leadership and the Congress were so enthusiastic to do this to them."

So what can reformers do? Says Gilbert, "Those of us who do this work are scratching our heads to figure out how we ever will get fundamental change."

Next issue: Some head scratching.

THE ADVENTURES OF A HUGE MOUTH

by Peter Hannan



election '94

State of emergency

By refusing to defend the positive powers of government, the Democrats have jeopardized their party—and the nation.

By David Moberg

The Democratic strategy heading into the elections is best summed up in the old maxim: any port in a storm. Running away from Bill Clinton and away from their party, Democratic candidates are retreating from any national agenda and—having utterly abandoned their traditional commitment to the downtrodden—most are working furiously to prove their conservative credentials. Bereft of any positive message, they are crafting nasty attacks on their opponents—though no meaner than those lobbed by Republicans.

The aging, shrinking hard core of the Democrats—New Dealer retirees, African-Americans, unionists, urbanites, liberals—is apathetic and demoralized. Republicans are energized:

with hopes of victory; right-wing Christian fervor; or simple loathing for Bill, Hillary and the whole Limbaugh pantheon of liberal evil-doers. The amorphous mass of swing voters is surly, angry and resentful—a modern, unorganized Know-Nothing Party. It's an ugly scene, likely to lead to an even uglier Congress.

Some Democrats hope to limit their losses by attacking the GOP's recently released Contract with America, a campaign document signed by more than 300 Republican congressional candidates that offers fiscal leg-eremain, tax cuts for the well-off and punishment for the weak. If, by attacking the contract, the Democrats can convince the country that the GOP has nothing to offer except warmed-over Reaganism, they just may stem the electoral tide that's rising against them. Yet even if their short-term tactics limit the rout, the 1994 election will confirm a devastating long-term trend that must be confronted.

Americans have lost faith in government. In the mid-'60s, according to an ongoing Gallup poll, three-fourths of Americans trusted the federal government to do what is right all or most of the time. With the ironic exception of an uptick in the Reagan years, when

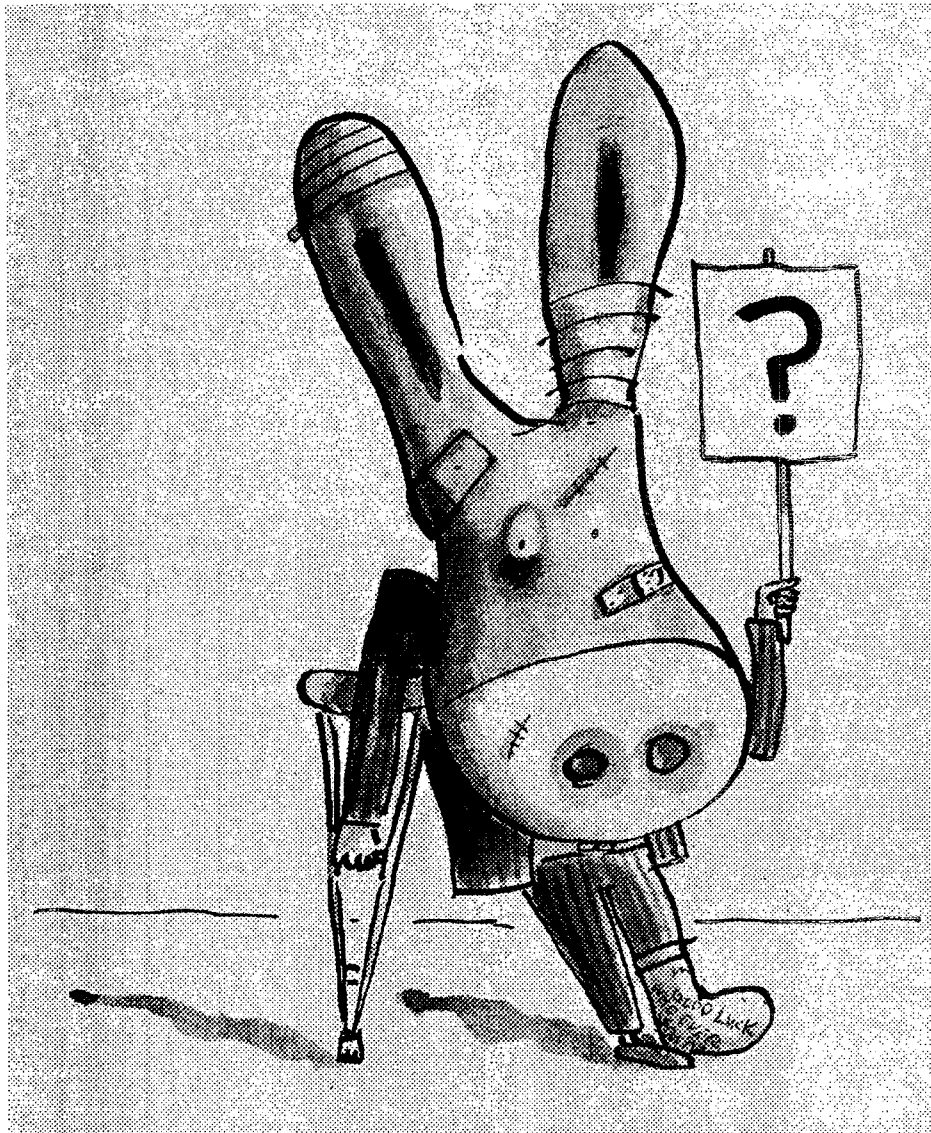
the Great Communicator repeatedly insisted that government couldn't be trusted, the trend has been all downhill. Now only 19 percent of Americans trust Washington.

There are many causes at work, starting in the '60s with phenomena ranging from disillusionment with the Vietnam War to a backlash against blacks, the new left and the counterculture. Yet one of the most important forces causing this collapse of faith is the decline in the standard of living of most Americans over the past two decades. The trend continues: median household income has declined 7 percent since 1989. It even dropped 1 percent from 1992 to 1993 during an economic recovery.

Not only have incomes stagnated or declined; most Americans have had to work harder to keep from losing even more ground. Prospects for their children seem bleak, public life is less pleasant, and personal safety seems less certain. From different ideological camps people also sense a loss of values and meaning. Many are angry at employers who show no loyalty to veteran workers; others resent the changing roles of women.

Government gets the blame, partly for good reasons, mainly for mistaken ones. Political analyst Kevin Phillips, in his new and, as usual, provocative book, *Arrogant Capital*, describes public distrust of a Washington choked by lobbyists (90,000 of them), special interest money and big, unresponsive bureaucracies. The nation's capital is rightly seen as a corrupt, incestuous political cesspool, but Phillips is

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wrong in assuming that the populist anger directed against “Washington” is focused exclusively on national government. Resentment against “Washington” is directed not just against the federal government but at the country’s entire political culture. It is naive to assume that scaling back the federal government will repair American politics. Compared to the United States, governments in virtually all other industrial countries are bigger, consume more taxes, offer more entitlements and intervene more aggressively in daily life—even under conservative leaders who criticize the public sector. As global integration and the spread of multinational corporations accelerate, governments everywhere are being eroded by these new marketplace forces, but nowhere more so than in the United States.

The problem in the United States, apart from a culture of anarchic individualism, rampant commercialism and ingrained distrust of the state, is that fewer and fewer people see government as working on their behalf. Despite their ideological conservatism, Americans have—at least since the New Deal—been operationally liberal, expecting govern-

ment to fix what’s wrong. Now, political analyst William Schneider argues, Americans are ideologically populist but operationally libertarian, favoring markets or at least distrusting government. Populism has always been an inchoate force in American politics, but in the past it has been a movement aligned primarily against the moneyed elites—and their control of government—and in favor of government, even if against ruling politicians or bureaucrats. Today’s populist anger has been channeled increasingly against government itself.

Especially after the Nixon presidency, the Republican right has worked effectively to exploit this anti-state populism. Running against government, they claim to want to liberate individuals and small businesses from the yoke of taxes and regulation. But this campaign against the government has left society increasingly subject to the forces of the marketplace, with domination by corporate power, rising inequality and social fragmentation, and ultimately a lack of democracy.

The Democrats, with honorable exceptions, have not been willing to argue that government is the means for democratic control of society. With key economic power concen-

trated in corporate hands, the government has been increasingly unable to intervene in the allocation of capital, to promote job creation that would reduce income disparity, or to block production decisions that harm the environment. Rather than challenge corporate power directly, Democrats have been more likely to propose policies to clean up the messes corporate capitalism leaves behind, from toxic dumps to inner-city poverty.

Phillips links the increase of economic inequality with the rise of financial speculation and the decline of the “real economy,” especially manufacturing. That is certainly true, but the story is more complex: global integration, trade policies tailored to foreign policy aims, overspending on the military and the absence of an industrial strategy all contributed to the decline. On many of these issues, Democrats were almost indistinguishable from Republicans.

The Democrats could have fought more vigorously against irresponsible corporations and big money interests. Instead, they became increasingly dependent on money from the very sources of the problems. At the same time the old

grass-roots base of the party, from urban political machines to unions, was shrinking. The emerging suburban majority at first did not lead to a shift in party identification. But it did reflect escapism—a flight from social problems and a pursuit of fragmented private utopias in socially restricted suburbs. As the economic well-being of “middle America” declined, voters were less willing to pay for social programs that might have mitigated the damage caused by wrenching economic changes. Racism exacerbated the problem: government social programs became identified with blacks—and thus discredited—in the eyes of many whites.

At the same time that the country’s always fragile sense of traditional community was withering, the electronic community of television was triumphant. Politics as played out on television—whether in its shallow reporting or its attack ads—contributed to both the cynicism of the average voter and the lack of understanding of government’s positive role. At least the precinct committeeman reminded voters of who collected the garbage.

Historians have argued that American politics undergoes periodic shifts during crucial elections that happen every three to four decades. In *Arrogant Capital*, Phillips contends that the expected political realignment of 1968—which should have shifted the country from New Deal liberalism to conservative Republicanism—never happened. Though Richard Nixon’s election marked a partial repudiation of the New Deal legacy, his disgrace in Watergate partially checked the GOP’s rise. Phillips also argues that opposition from Washington’s entrenched power structure blocked the conservative realignment.

That power structure arose after the Great Depression, when government bureaucracies were vastly enlarged in order to stabilize the business cycles that previously reined in financial speculation. But just as big government sought to control capitalism, big business also worked to control the tax and regulatory structures that emerged. This new business-government symbiosis thus served to temper the longer cycles of political realignment as well. After 1968, the federal government’s power was often divided and gridlocked.

Consequently, the problem in our political system lies not just with power-hungry elites in Washington—the problem lies with the nature of capitalism. Other Western countries have been faced with the same problem. Generally, they have developed varying degrees of social democratic or, in Japan’s case, corporatist governments that tried to both maintain economic stability and regulate business. Until Margaret Thatcher transformed British society, the United States had by far the weakest form of “liberalism,” with the least government or labor direction to the economy. In many advanced countries these close relationships between the public and private sectors have led to corruption. But there is little reason to think that weaker government leads to a decline in business influence within society. In the United States government was corrupted by business more through political contributions than the elaborate system of contracts and kick-

backs of countries like Japan and Italy.

The “gridlock” of recent years, with its roots in the 1968 election, has been simply one feature of a downward spiral of both politics and government that has led to the staggering voter distrust today. While Republicans assailed government, Democrats failed to push government to fulfill its most important functions: to both control private capital and to increase productive social capital—by protecting the environment, promoting education and sustaining cities.

As the Democrats grew more dependent on corporations, lawyers and bankers to finance their increasingly expensive campaigns, they were less and less willing to challenge those moneyed elites in order to make government work for the vast majority. And Republican attacks on even minimal initiatives by Democrats led to compromises that simply made people conclude that government doesn’t work very well for them after all.

The push for health care reform recapitulates this sorry history. Clinton started with an idea that had great potential, but he compromised from the beginning by failing to pursue the single-payer approach, which could have generated strong popular support. Consequently, he offered a plan that Republicans and business leaders—who were being wooed in a misguided obsession with “bipartisanship”—then attacked as viciously as if he’d proposed workers’ soviets. Many middle-class Americans were scared off by both the attack and the weaknesses of the plan itself, rightly fearing restrictions on their choice of doctors. Ironically, with the defeat of national health care reform, Americans will have even less of a voice in their medical treatment, as corporate bureaucracies consolidate control over the industry.

By attacking and enfeebling the limited Democratic initiatives for government over the past quarter-century, Republicans have made government less effective, less inclusive and less responsive to citizens. Then they have used their own handiwork to argue that government is hopelessly flawed. Unfortunately, the Democrats, year by year, race by race, have given ground without engaging in any real debate.

This year, congressional Republicans again defeated a campaign finance reform plan that the Democrats had half-heartedly pushed. The absence of real campaign finance reform guarantees that politics will continue to be conducted in a way that makes people distrust politicians. This cynicism further helps Republicans campaigning against government.

Despite the deep structural flaws in the current political system, Clinton actually managed to push a few worthwhile initiatives through Congress during this session. Of course, the divided Democrats are unwilling to defend Clinton’s accomplishments—even though most are far from liberal. One *Wall Street Journal* headline tells the tale: “As Clinton is derided as flaming liberal by GOP, his achievements look centrist and pro-business.” Democratic pollster Peter Hart told the *Journal*: “The bottom line is the public feels Bill

Clinton has accomplished too little of his agenda, rather than too much." But how many Democrats are saying that?

Unwilling to launch a searing attack on Republicans, not just as obstructionists but as defenders of wealth and privilege, the Democrats have little to offer. Their party has no future except as the defender of a government that can challenge the power of corporations and resurrect a more popular and participatory democracy. To do that, the Democrats must sever their own ties to big money, which means making dramatic campaign finance reform a key goal.

Phillips, who downplays the moneyed corruption of politics, offers a grab bag of institutional reforms. Some of them would be desirable, but most would be hard to enact. More direct democracy—like initiatives and referenda—would be good if they would not be distorted by big money (as California's initiatives are). Proportional representation would also be valuable to break through political sclerosis. Phillips argues as well for removing the legal apparatus that supports the two-party duopoly of politics. According to a recent Times Mirror Center for the People and the Press survey, 53 percent of Americans believe that there should be a third major political party. The sentiment is strong among all ideologies, especially among liberals.

But reform of political institutions is not likely to proceed effectively without a simultaneous reform of corporations. First, it would be good to change the corporate charters to give citizens more control over private companies. Then Congress should end the legal fiction of corporate personhood that gives corporations free speech rights as if they were citizens. Finally, greater democracy in the workplace would give the public new power over important economic decisions.

Making government work for people does not mean resurrecting the New Deal; there are new, more supple ways for government to work. Channeling private sector activity can, in

some cases, accomplish the same things as direct public spending. Also, making government efficient should be a top priority for a new Democratic strategy.

If the Democrats do not make the case for government, they will not be able to make the case for Democrats. Whatever short-term gimmicks or twists of luck may keep them in office, their long-term future requires them to address the distrust of government not by retreating but by making government more worthy of people's trust.

When Clinton faces the new Congress—certain to be dominated by a bloc of Republicans and conservative Democrats, and possibly controlled outright by the GOP—he has two choices. One is to muddle along, promoting punitive welfare reform measures and conservative trade policies that the Republicans can support. He can then hope to run on his bipartisan accomplishments.

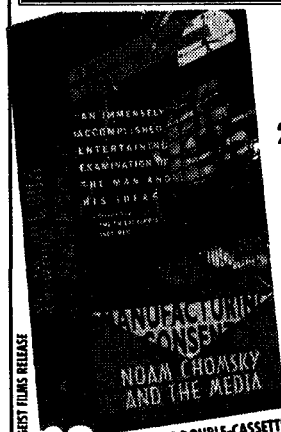
Or he can dust off his campaign pledge of "Putting People First," and get behind progressive proposals, such

as proposing a strategy to guarantee a job to everyone who wants one—which would fit in with his emphasis on balancing rights and responsibilities. He can challenge members of Congress, and when they balk, he can take his case to the American people. He can spend the next two years attacking the big money domination of politics and the need to make government work for average Americans again. He can mobilize popular support to pressure recalcitrant Democrats.

Adopting either strategy represents an enormous gamble. The first is a certain long-range losing strategy for Democrats. The second might make Bill Clinton the Harry Truman of his generation—though he's already squandered so much personal trust and goodwill in his first two years that he may never be able to overcome that liability. It's not likely that he will choose the second course, but it has two special merits: it would be the right course for the country, and it would make politics interesting again. ◀

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election '94

California dreaming

N

ational health care reform may be dead in the water, but that didn't stop the ad hoc "Mad as Hell Coalition" from taking the battle to the streets of Oakland, Calif. Or rather, to the doorsteps of one insurance company that's partly to blame—Blue Cross, which insures one in four Americans. On a sunny day in September the ragtag band of seniors and disabled activists rode their wheelchairs, festooned with hand-drawn signs reading "Yes on 186" and "Single payer for all," to the local Blue Cross office and promptly chained themselves to the doors. Three hours later the police hauled the noisy rabble-rousers off to jail.

Blue Cross won this skirmish, but the grass-roots movement behind the protest may ultimately have the last word. A statewide initiative on the November

ballot in California would do what Clinton and Co. never had the political will to do: Kill the insurance industry.

Single-payer health care reform is now before California voters with a plan that would turn the state into a national laboratory for Canadian-style health care. The idea behind Proposition 186, the California Health Security Act, is deceptively simple: Cut out the massive amount of bureaucratic waste created by insurance companies, have individuals pay an additional 2.5 percent state income tax and businesses a 4.4 to 8.9 percent payroll tax (equal to much less than current health care spending), and give state residents a health insurance card to go to the doctor of their choice when they get sick. No more shopping for insurance plans and worrying about whether you're covered, no more copayments and deductibles. And today's reality of 6 million uninsured Californians would be a thing of the past.

Taking the place of hundreds of California insurance companies would be a single state health security fund, overseen by an elected

health commissioner. Money to support the fund would come from a \$1-per-pack hike in the tobacco tax; federal, state and local health care funds, such as the Medicare and Medicaid programs, would be voluntarily folded into the mix. "The eyes of Washington are on California," says Dr. Barbara Newman, chair of the California Physicians' Alliance (part of the 7,000-member Physicians for a National Health Program), which helped prepare the initiative, along with groups such as Neighbor to Neighbor, Health Access and the California Congress of Seniors. "If single-payer could pass and be implemented in California and serve as an example, there's definitely a chance that it would spread to other states, like it did in Canada. Single-payer's not dead—the whole California initiative has been fantastic for making Washington see that this movement is viable."

Supporters of single-payer see California as fertile ground for a grass-roots rebellion. Doctors, nurses and patients are reeling from the effects of one of the oldest and largest efforts to reorganize health care along the corporate managed-care model. Private companies have launched a frantic campaign to create "integrated health care delivery systems" that control everything from doctors and hospitals to long-term care and prescription drugs. Corporations compete fiercely to offer a low-cost health insurance "product" in California's hugely profitable market. Since the end of July, when the Clinton health care package began to unravel, stock prices for many California HMOs have soared more than 20 percent, and HMO corporate mergers have gone into overdrive.

"There's been a tremendous transformation of the health care industry, and an attack on the quality of care and especially on registered nurses," says Chuck Idelson of

The state's referendum may determine the fate of U.S. health care reform.

By Mickey Butts
BERKELEY, CA

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the California Nurses Association, which has endorsed single-payer. "A lot of hospitals are being run inadequately staffed, patients are being prematurely discharged before they're ready to go home—they're doing these things basically to increase their profits, to increase their share of the marketplace."

California's single-payer coalition includes endorsers as diverse as the League of Women Voters and the California Federation of Labor as well as the Consumers Union and Los Angeles' high-tech Bell Industries, a former defense contractor. It has the support as well of nearly every member of the Bay Area's congressional delegation.

Such a solid alliance stands in marked contrast to the bitter infighting that's been raging among single-payer advocates in Washington, D.C., over whether to "go along to get along" with Clinton's managed-competition plan.

Single-payer advocates are beginning a tactical shift as potentially powerful as the one that led to Canada's single-payer system in the early '70s. There, a local movement starting in Saskatchewan in 1967 eventually spread to every province in Canada by 1971. According to some single-payer advocates, the United States has an historic opportunity to follow suit. "About a year ago we began to see that things were not going to pan out in the way we had hoped," says Joselito Laudencia, director of Neighbor to Neighbor's San Francisco chapter. "Although Clinton personally favored single-payer, he and Hillary were trying to compro-

mise. So that's when we started to look to California."

The campaign didn't have to look far for the initiative's model: Health Access had already helped draft state legislation in 1991 that would have set up a Canadian-style health care system in California. Sponsored by Democratic state Sen. Nick Petris, S.B. 308 eventually fell just short of a two-thirds majority in the state Senate.

As in many policy arenas, California has long been a bellwether of national sentiment. All through the '80s, health care reform was in the political air. The legislature experimented with gradualist insurance industry reforms such as managed competition, cost-containment and underwriting reform to make insurance more available, affordable and equitable. Reform efforts peaked in 1992, when a host of competing health care reform plans circulated, chief among them a middle-of-the-road initiative on the 1992 state ballot sponsored by the California Medical Association, a plan viewed with great interest by presidential candidate Bill Clinton. Proposition 166, the Affordable Basic Care Initiative, would have required employers to pay at least 75 percent of their employees' insurance premiums. But faced with a strict employer mandate, big business fought back with a \$9 million campaign that led to a two-to-one defeat on election day. Interestingly, voter surveys after the election showed that, although two-thirds of the electorate voted against the measure primarily out of concern for its economic impact, a stunning 23 percent said it didn't go far enough

in providing comprehensive, universal coverage, and 10 percent voted against it for lack of cost-containment measures.

Out of the ashes of Proposition 166 arose the basis of the coalition that now comprises Proposition 186. Starting up with \$200,000 in seed money from core organizations, they formed Californians for Health Security and then called upon the impressive army of volunteer canvassers already working with groups like Neighbor to Neighbor, California Congress of Seniors and the Gray Panthers. "Many people

Single-payer advocates have assembled an impressive coalition. But they face an uphill fight.

around the state were not too optimistic about the signature-gathering phase and thought it would be very difficult to qualify relying on volunteers," says Tamara Hubinsky, Health Access' interim director. "But what's so phenomenal is that they got it to qualify so easily, with over a million signatures, using a primarily volunteer effort of 10,000 people, and they did it in a very short period of time. I think that speaks to the potential for success

in the state for single-payer." About 15 full-time paid organizers in every region of the state, many drawn from organizations like Neighbor to Neighbor, provided the backbone of the signature-gathering phase, and then kept organizing once the measure qualified for the ballot. "It's really unusual how people are spontaneously dropping other things in their lives to talk to their neighbors and friends and get them involved," says Paul Milne, Proposition 186's campaign manager. "A gynecologist in L.A. took off 4 weeks from his practice, unpaid, to speak for the campaign, and a man over 80 years old in San Diego collected signatures nearly every day during the petition campaign. That's an extraordinary volunteer action. And people are doing it because they have a deep sense of what's at stake for themselves and their families. They realize that they're not just doing this for others—we're all at risk, so they're doing it for themselves, their family and the people they know. That seems to light a fairly intense fire."

Milne speaks from a deep knowledge of grass-roots organizing that goes back to his days organizing farmworkers with Cesar Chavez in the '70s. The organization Milne works for, the Institute for Effective Action, has helped draft strategy for INFAC's Nestle boycott and CISPES' and Neighbor to Neighbor's fights against U.S.-sponsored wars in Central America. Other successes include the 1988 fight in California for Proposition 103 and Ralph Nader's automobile insurance reform initiative. This round, Milne emphasizes a key lesson learned from past struggles: "You can do a little of a whole lot of things or you can do a whole lot of a couple of things." That's why after organizers got

Proposition 186 on the ballot, they channeled their energy into raising funds for TV and radio ads—which two-thirds of California's 8 million voters rely on as their sole source of information.

The campaign has relied to an unprecedented degree on fund-raising house parties, over 1,000 so far. Friends invite their friends over to hear a campaign speaker, often a doctor, and then write sizeable checks. So far, the campaign has been able to raise \$1,000 a night, house-by-house, or enough to reach 17,000 people with a 30-second TV spot. A similar bare-bones effort is happening with phone banks—every dollar raised goes to purchase new radio ads, which broadcast a toll-free number.

The other way the campaign brings in supporters is by getting the endorsements of large organizations that have the means to communicate with their members. In a significant coup, large mainstream groups like California's chapter of the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP) and the California Teachers Association signed on as endorsers. The liberal California Congress of Seniors, with its active network of 350 seniors groups, was an important driving force in early organizing efforts, but the entry of AARP, and its 3 million members, signaled single-payer's breakthrough into the mainstream. In an underfunded campaign, AARP will be critical in getting the word out to large numbers of bedrock voters like seniors.

Joselito Laudencia of Neighbor to Neighbor suggests that states wishing to follow in California's footsteps examine the campaign's coalition-building effort. They've aimed for not just single-payer organizations, but also for nurses and other health care provider organizations, which are growing increasingly frustrated by their dealings with the health insurance industry and the rapidly reorganizing hospital and HMO systems.

In addition, Proposition 186 has had great success getting more than 500 small businesses to endorse, pointing out that businesses that already provide insurance will save a great deal of money under a single-payer system. Teachers' organizations are also often overlooked as allies—groups such as the California Teachers Association and the L.A. Unified School District realize that they'll save millions in health care insurance premiums if they switch to single-payer, freeing up that money for education.

The single-payer coalition faces an uphill battle. In the No on 186 camp, otherwise known as Taxpayers Against the Government Takeover, sits a lineup of heavy-hitters that reads like a Who's Who of the rich and powerful: the California Chamber of Commerce, the National Federation of Independent Businesses, the California Manufacturers Association, the Association of California Insurance Companies, California Association of HMOs, California Association of Hospitals and Health Systems, Blue Shield of California, Wells Fargo, Hewlett-Packard. Both gubernatorial candidates, Gov. Pete Wilson and Kathleen Brown, oppose single payer as well.

And in the politics-makes-strange-bedfellows category:

the California National Organization of Women (NOW) recently "withdrew" its endorsement of Proposition 186 because it "does not explicitly guarantee abortion rights," while a Catholic bishops group has opposed the initiative, "fearing that the initiative would expand abortion rights." (Abortion isn't specifically mentioned in the initiative.) And the Oakland-based National Latina Health Organization came out against 186 because it doesn't provide full benefits to the undocumented, only emergency, public health and preventative care. Supporters say that state law on initiatives requires them to stick to a "single subject" like health care, not stray into complex matters like residency status, which the measure leaves up to the legislature to define.

Progressive opponents are mostly keeping quiet, though, leaving big business to wage the real shouting match. "Our opponents are moving into real attack mode with ads that are all from a few strategic premises," says Milne. "First: hide. Voters can't know it's insurance companies paying for this, because then they won't believe. Then, create the illusion that everybody's against 186."

Over the coming weeks, the media will undoubtedly be filled with ominous-sounding denunciations of "socialized medicine." "They're playing on people's fear of big government and big institutions, but what the insurance companies fear is loss of profits," counters Barbara Newman of the California Physicians' Alliance.

A look at the most recent campaign contribution filings reveals that nearly 90 percent of the \$5.8 million that sin-

gle-payer opponents have raised so far has come from the insurance industry and hospital groups. Out-of-state contributions totaled a whopping \$3.1 million, primarily from the Health Insurance Association of America (famous for their Harry and Louise ads against national health care reform) and the Alliance for Managed Competition. The two groups were key contributors to the almost \$150 million interest groups spent fighting, and killing, national health care reform. Compare that to the \$1.9 million that Proposition 186 supporters have raised, mainly from the California Teachers Association and from house parties around the state.

Can single-payer win in California? A carefully prepared poll taken in September by the Kaiser Family Foundation showed that, of the 29 percent surveyed who'd heard of the initiative, 38 percent supported Proposition 186 and 34 percent opposed it. The most recent Field Poll showed 53 percent "no" and 30 percent "yes." But polls are notoriously fickle indicators of voter sentiment.

It remains to be seen whether in 1994 enough frustration with the failure of national health care reform exists to propel Proposition 186 to victory. "There's a lot of anger out there," says Laudencia of Neighbor to Neighbor. "Never in my lifetime have I seen so much fervor for health care reform that crosses such a broad section of our society, from seniors and business people to Republicans and Democrats. That's why I'm hopeful we'll win."

Mickey Butts is associate editor of the *East Bay Monthly*.

50 YEARS IS ENOUGH

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and the
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Edited by
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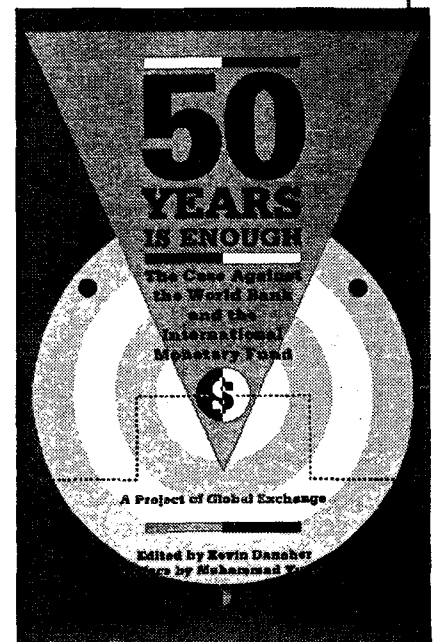
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election '94

The virtual campaign

T

he Year of the Woman has been superseded—at least in California—by a season of unprincipled bombast and immigrant-bashing. The main Democratic candidates—State Treasurer Kathleen Brown, running for governor, and Sen. Dianne Feinstein, attempting to fend off a challenge from Rep. Michael Huffington—are slipping in the polls in fractious, bitter fights that involve vastly expensive video-driven appeals to fear of crime, suspicion of government and anti-immigrant xenophobia.

Once Dianne Feinstein was well ahead in the polls; as recently as July the notion that first-term Rep. Michael Huffington, a carpetbagging Texan who moved to California only in 1991, could successfully challenge her seemed quixotic if not laughable.

But by mid-October Mark DiCamillo, director of the state's respected Field

Poll, called the race for Senate a dead heat. It's so close, he argues, that California's 80,000 Green Party members, running their own senatorial candidate for the first time, could hand victory to Huffington by carving votes away from Feinstein, even though Greens represent less than 1 percent of registered voters.

Huffington's out-of-nowhere success rides on money. Major money. Though Feinstein is generally considered one of the five wealthiest members of the Senate, the Texan's \$77 million fortune (obtained from the sale of the family oil business in 1990) has allowed him to budget some \$20 million for this campaign—so there'll be plenty left over for an expected White House bid if he wins.

Despite her reputation as a prodigious fund-raiser, Feinstein recently had to take out a second mortgage on her San Francisco mansion to try to keep pace with Huffing-

ton's furious spending.

And Huffington has spent it wisely, hiring leading Republican campaign gurus like Ken Khachigian, long a Ronald Reagan ally, who have launched a crippling salvo of attack ads that destroyed Feinstein's lead. When, in early October, Feinstein blasted Huffington for failing to remove racial covenants buried in the deeds of homes he owned in Texas, Khachigian immediately dispatched researchers to San Francisco's city hall to look into the deed on Feinstein's property. To the despair of the Feinstein staffers who had failed to do their homework, he found a similar ugly restriction marring her paperwork. The fact that neither discovery is proof of racism—the covenants have long been let lie in old deeds because times have changed and they are legally unenforceable—is irrelevant. Scoring is all.

This never-never barrage of negativity constitutes a kind of virtual campaign, one that is happening in the hyperspace of TV commercials, in anti-Huffington hit pieces in *Vanity Fair* and *The New Yorker*, and even in the funny pages—where Garry Trudeau lambasted Huffington and his New Age wife Arianna in *Doonesbury* for two straight weeks. But the man keeps gaining in the polls.

The Huffington strategy is to surf into office on the rising tide of voter resentment at politics as usual. The power of that resentment can be seen in the candidate's meteoric rise despite his nonexistent legislative record—his only known accomplishment was to increase tax deductions for charitable contributions—and despite Feinstein's solid accomplishments during her brief tenure in Washington.

In the Senate, Feinstein masterfully put together bipartisan support for an assault weapons ban that withstood the worst the National Rifle Association could throw at it. And she made an unlikely ally in arch-conservative Sen. J. Bennett Johnston of Louisiana, paving the way for the passage of the landmark California Desert Protection Act.

*In California,
Democrats
Dianne
Feinstein and
Kathleen
Brown are
struggling
to survive
a barrage
of negativity.*

By John Roemer
SAN FRANCISCO

Yet when those 30-second Huffington spots portray Feinstein as "A Career Politician Who'll Say Or Do Anything To Stay In Office," the anti-incumbent message has voters nodding their heads in agreement.

There's no denying that politics is Dianne Feinstein's life. As president of the San Francisco Board of Supervisors she vaulted into the mayoralty when George Moscone was assassinated in his city hall office in 1978. After three terms as mayor she ran for governor, only to lose to Pete Wilson in 1990. Her 1992 Senate victory, along with that of Barbara Boxer, was a Year of the Woman milestone.

By contrast, Huffington's life has been spent as a businessman wannabe in the shadow of his mega-successful father, whose fortune now fuels his son's campaign.

Roy Huffington, a legendary wildcatter who is regularly listed as one of the hundred wealthiest Texans, struck it rich in the mid-'70s after he found a huge petroleum field off Borneo and entered into an \$8.8 billion deal to supply natural gas to Japan for the next 21 years. He worked in partnership with Pertamina, the Indonesian state oil and gas monopoly run by relatives and cronies of President Suharto.

Michael Huffington joined his father's firm, Huffco, in 1976, just in time to cash in on its Indonesian success. But he arrived to find the family company in league with a government of corrupt thugs. From 1981 to 1984—with Michael Huffington as vice chairman—Huffco made eight separate shipments of shock batons, handcuffs, billy clubs, fingerprint kits and fingerprint ink to the Suharto regime.

Huffco's illegal export of unlicensed police equipment was detected by the U.S. Department of Commerce and punished in 1986 with a \$250,000 fine. A Huffco lawyer called the shipments a routine favor to the Indonesian govern-

ment. "We got asked to do things for them all the time, and did," he told the *Wall Street Journal*, which first reported the shock baton shipments last August.

Dianne Feinstein's anti-Huffington commercials have mentioned the shock baton story, but she has good reason not to make it a major campaign issue. Though she never personally profited from dealings with Indonesia, she has offered strong support for weapons sales to the Indonesian government, despite Clinton administration efforts to halt such sales until human rights improvements are made there. Last June Feinstein co-sponsored a successful effort to cripple a law that would have prohibited Indonesia from using U.S. weapons in East Timor.

"We're here. Get used to it."

On a recent Saturday Juanita Chavez had a difficult time getting passersby in San Francisco's bustling Latino district to slow down and look at her leaflets condemning Proposition 187. But the 22-year-old wasn't going to give up. After all, she's the niece of the late and legendary Cesar Chavez, founder of the United Farm Workers union. She has political organizing in her blood.

Chavez at last decided to address her target audience directly. "Indocumentados!" she shouted at two young Latina mothers pushing strollers through the throng. The startled women did a double take, slowed and listened as Chavez warned in Spanish that their children will be barred from school and health care if SOS succeeds at the polls. The women stopped, took the leaflets and tentatively agreed to attend a community meeting on the issue—after Chavez assured them that Immigration and Naturalization Service agents would not be present to check green cards.

Throughout the state similar scenes represent a major organizing effort in ethnic communities to defeat the SOS initiative. Chavez is just one advocate in what has become an explosion of Latino grass-roots networking against the proposal.

Current polls, though, suggest that 187 will pass overwhelmingly. Pete Wilson's for it. Michael Huffington is leaning that way and—to the intense distress of the large Latino following that helped elect her—so is Dianne Feinstein. Only Kathleen Brown has said no to SOS.

But support for the measure is hardly based upon logic. Denying public health care, public schooling and public social services to illegal aliens may save the state \$200 million a year, according to the state's legislative analyst—but it will put at risk billions of federal dollars that go to fund these programs. Contrary to the propaganda of the pro-SOS campaign, immigrants are not a drain on the economy. One General Accounting Office study shows that, in fact, immigrants contribute more in taxes to the U.S. economy than they consume in government services. And, opponents argue, requiring doctors and schoolteachers to report possible illegal aliens to the INS will make every brown-skinned person suspect, creating a gestapo-like atmosphere that has some calling the measure the SS initiative.

But the measure plays into prevailing stereotypes. "I like Mexicans," Bob Simmons, a pro-SOS organizer from northern California, explains, "but they are uneducated peasants, and they come here for sex, dancing and drugs. Then they get paid benefits. If SOS passes, they'll stay south of the border."

If Proposition 187 passes, the measure will be immediately challenged. Lawyers at the Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund say the badly written measure cannot withstand constitutional scrutiny because federal courts have long held that all children in the United States are entitled to an education.

Professor Jose Cuellar, chairman of La Raza Studies at San Francisco State University, believes that in the long run SOS may be irrelevant. "As the white population of this state ages, it's going to be dependent on the young, multi-ethnic, Latino-dominated workforce to pay taxes and keep the economy cooking," he said. "You can pass 200 SOS's but you're not going to get rid of us. We're here. Get used to it."

—JR

In her run for governor, Brown faces an even tougher fight. The latest Los Angeles Times poll gives Wilson a 13-point edge among all voters, and polls have repeatedly shown Brown's once-strong support among women slipping away. Wilson's tough-on-crime rhetoric plays well to an uneasy electorate, and he has made the hot-button issue his own through a long alliance with the state's powerful prison guards union and through militant calls for three-strikes-you're-out legislation. Even though the state legislature passed a three-strikes law in March, the governor has kept up the fear-of-crime drumbeat by promoting a statewide voter initiative identical to the law. The measure is expensive—the state's legislative analyst estimates it will cost \$3 billion annually in new prison construction and other expenses by 2003—and widely perceived as unfair to non-violent criminals whose third strike can doom them to 25-to-life even if they do nothing more than steal a beer from a convenience store.

Brown has attempted to outflank Wilson on the crime issue. She too supports "three strikes" and, in an emotional moment in the gubernatorial campaign's lone debate, she revealed her daughter's date rape and told Wilson he could not possibly know what it's like to be a woman worried about crime. But Brown is unlikely to be able to out-tough Wilson consistently in the eyes of most voters. Undercutting her adamant anti-crime stance, she has taken a principled position against his second gut issue—the rush to scapegoat California's growing immigrant population for the problems

of overcrowding and unemployment.

Even Pete Wilson had a hard time swallowing the extremist Proposition 187, the so-called "Save Our State" proposal on the November ballot that would deny most social services—including public schooling and all but emergency medical care—to undocumented immigrants, and that would require schools and hospitals to report them to the Immigration and Naturalization Service. (See accompanying story.)

After months of hesitation Wilson eventually did endorse the measure, which is a natural outgrowth of the loud outcry he has raised over the alleged high taxpayer cost of "illegals"—virtually a synonym for Latinos in a state sharing a lengthy border with Mexico. Brown at first flirted with the code phrases of immigrant-bashing by calling for more border guards, angering many of her Latino supporters. But she has more recently spoken out forcefully against the rising tide of anti-immigrant hysteria.

That's not a popular stand: polls show Proposition 187 passing easily. And the issues on which Brown polls strongest—education and the economy—have virtually disappeared from the political radar in the din over crime and immigration. By limiting the debate to topics of fear and bigotry, Wilson has come from a 20-point deficit to take a commanding lead in the race for governor. Such is the state of politics in California today.

John Roemer is a contributing editor at the *San Francisco Weekly*.

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MEMOIR OF A RACE TRAITOR

MAB SEGREST



election '94

Liberal arts

Rarely does a U.S. Senate race in Minnesota possess national significance. But this year, Minnesota voters are being told that their open Senate seat is the only one that a Democrat has at least an even chance of winning.

A Senate candidate in Minnesota hopes to prove that progressive politics can still win elections.

By Adam Platt
MINNEAPOLIS

This prospect offers little consolation to that Democrat, former state Representative Ann Wynia, who is locked in a close race with first-term U.S. Rep. Rod Grams. Two recent newspaper polls showed the margins separating the two were dental-floss thin—one had Grams nominally in front; the other, Wynia.

As such, the race is receiving close attention from high-profile national figures. President Clinton will have made multiple visits to the state by election day, while Senate Minority Leader Bob Dole has come west to practice his brand of attack politics.

Wynia seems like a

ready-made target for Dole's invective. She personifies establishment liberalism in Minnesota, having spent more than a decade in the state legislature and having served several terms on the Board of Regents of the University of Minnesota.

Her ideology often mirrors that of Paul Wellstone, Minnesota's unabashedly liberal senator. Wynia enthusiastically endorses his single-payer health care plan and she makes no effort to distance herself from either Wellstone or President Clinton. Like Wellstone, Wynia is on leave from a position as a college political science professor. In most states, this pedigree would render Wynia a political pariah, but Minnesota remains a breed apart. "To be a career politician is not an obscenity here—yet," explains Wyman Spano, publisher of the influential newsletter *Politics in Minnesota*. "A lot of people still consider it public service."

That fact is at the heart of why a progressive agenda still appears viable in Minnesota. This remains a state with a healthy, diversified economy, livable cities, decent schools and high levels of voter participation. People

still retain a strong sense of community and shared responsibility, and are as inclined to give government as much credit for these successes as any other phenomena. Minnesota is not immune from the problems that afflict the nation; they just manifest themselves more modestly here. As a result, the cynicism now crushing the campaigns of Democrats in other states is much less prevalent here—allowing Wynia's liberal message to receive a fair hearing.

Wynia's chances have also been buoyed by the considerable support she's received from the Wellstone Alliance, the political operation linked to the state's junior senator. The Alliance is pouring a preponderance of its resources—mostly mailing lists and volunteer staff—into the Wynia campaign, likely at the expense of the state governor's race, which is starting to look like a landslide for incumbent Arne Carlson, a moderate Republican.

"We are definitely more focused on the Senate race," says Jeff Blodgett, Minnesota coordinator for Wellstone. "This seat is absolutely critical to maintaining the Democratic majority in the Senate." The Alliance's efforts were considered instrumental in guiding both Wynia and gubernatorial candidate John Marty through difficult primary battles against more conservative Democrats.

Grams, by contrast, has received limited support from his state party—which is deeply split over abortion and other social issues. Carlson, a popular Rockefeller Republican, is rarely seen in his company, and a coalition of moderate party activists made a public break with the hard-right Grams.

The race, so far, has hewn closely to predictable national political themes. Even in liberal Minnesota most 1994 Democrats tend to talk like 1974 Republicans—Wellstone

being the singular exception. Wynia, an old-line Minnesota liberal, has done her best to paint Grams as the consummate Washington insider he claims to revile, while Grams runs derisive ads framing Wynia as a tax raiser in her days as a Democratic leader in the legislature. Though Grams' record is thin, Wynia has focused on his recent votes against the federal anti-crime and lobbying reform bills.

"The lobbying vote was just plain bad politics," admits Sarah Janacek, a Republican public affairs consultant. Despite this, Janacek insists that when, just days before the election, a conservative Republican is in a dead-heat for one of Minnesota's U.S. Senate seats, it is an unmistakable harbinger of change. "I'm convinced there's something huge happening, and I think the Minnesota media just isn't getting it," she maintains. Janacek is quick to remind observers that for the first time this century a greater number of voters cast ballots in the state's Republican primary than in the Democratic one, and that Grams appears strong despite his status as the most right-wing candidate to seek national office in the state in recent memory.

Grams bears little resemblance to the once-admired senator whom he seeks to succeed. Moderate GOPer David Durenberger was the state's most popular political figure before he was censured by the Senate and indicted on charges of defrauding taxpayers by funneling personal expenses through Congress. He currently awaits trial, and declined to seek a fourth term. Interestingly, the Durenberger scandal has not been an issue in the campaign.

Though lacking both Durenberger's charm and his moderate ideology, Grams—a former local TV anchor and part-time real estate developer—was able to defeat former Rep. Gerry Sikorski (D-MN) in his first race for elective office. Grams' appeal remains in question, though, since Sikorski had been bloodied by the House banking scandal.

Perceived as something of a cipher by Minnesota political pundits, Grams has been compared to first-term California congressman and Senate candidate Michael Huffington. Though the analogy looks good on the surface, it is largely specious. Grams is a hard-working, sincere ideologue whose modest lifestyle and beat-up attire bear more legitimate comparison to Sen. Wellstone than Rep. Huffington. As a member of the GOP leadership's "theme team," Grams has put his TV training to work, making regular forays to the House floor to deliver highly partisan gut punches to the White House. Grams' record is capped by his sponsorship of massive tax rollback legislation and by his participation in the rabid Whitewater hearings.

Grams' ideology is of the knee-jerk variety, often lacking originality and intellectual consistency. When challenged, he regularly justifies his politics by dead-panning, "These are the values I was raised with." The question is whether they resonate in Minnesota, a state whose politics don't typically mirror national trends. "Grams acts like he's running in Indiana," says Spano of *Politics in Minnesota*. "Minnesotans don't mind Republicans, but he's just too much of one, I think. ... Ann's done a decent job of defining him. Running against lobbyists is good politics anywhere."

Grams' voting record has made it difficult to claim the outsider label, which Wynia has enthusiastically adopted, though she wears it unconvincingly. To date, Wynia has successfully evaded being tarred as a political insider, though she clearly is one. "That's because she's a woman," says Spano. "Gender plays here. It's still difficult to make women into insiders." Though Wynia is as bland as Grams on the stump, she exudes a cheer and optimism absent in Grams' dark prophecies about the president and liberalism.

As of September 30, Wynia had raised roughly \$1.5 million, Grams just under a million. Grams has collected a higher percentage of his funds in-state than Wynia, and has tried to make her popularity with the feminist funders of EMILY's List and certain Hollywood donors an issue, though the state media seems to have little interest in the subject.

In fact, despite both candidates' efforts, there seems to be no single issue or theme driving the Senate race in Minnesota. Voters are simply being asked to choose between vastly different ideological visions. "Never have the differences been drawn so sharply," says political consultant D.J. Leary. "It's old-fashioned government activism vs. continued gridlock, pure and simple."

And this year, the people of Minnesota expect to cast a swing vote for the nation. ◀

Adam Platt is a journalist and media critic who lives in St. Paul.

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DEFENSE

Pork-o-rama

*Congress
claims it's
cutting military
spending to the
bone, but
influential
lawmakers are
finding plenty
of fat for their
home districts.*

By David Evans
WASHINGTON, D.C.

S

urely, the Army's rocket scientists at the Redstone Arsenal in Huntsville, Ala., have more important things to do than pump iron. But they are about to get an expanded gymnasium courtesy of the U.S. Senate.

This particular project was right at the top of an alphabetized list of military construction projects for fiscal 1995 authorized by the Senate Armed Services Committee. There it was, under "A" for Alabama and "A" for Army: \$2,600,000 for a "physical fitness center addition." What caught the eye was the amount of money requested by the Defense Department: none. The gymnasium expansion was a gift from the senators—who were also the receivers, in this case of jobs for Alabama workers and contracts for Alabama firms. Alabama Democrat Richard Shelby, a member

in good standing on the Senate Armed Services Committee, seems to have done right by his constituents.

There were more than a hundred such "add-on" construction projects contained in the fiscal 1995 defense bill; none of these add-on projects were included in the Pentagon's original request for military construction funds. Altogether these projects will cost American taxpayers more than \$515 million.

With the defense budget totaling roughly \$260 billion, it may seem hardly worth the effort to quibble over a "mere" \$515 million. But an examination of the legislative process that produced these add-on projects reveals much that is wrong with the nation's defense spending priorities. There is compelling evidence that Congress siphoned money from more pressing programs to fund its add-on projects—projects that smell suspiciously like pork. At a time when military bases are being closed, maintenance backlogs are growing and vital spare parts remain unpurchased, it seems that lawmakers are finding various ways to continue

stuffing pork into the nation's military budget.

Currently, the Army alone is saddled with some \$900 million worth of deferred maintenance, and the backlog is growing by \$100 million a year. As an example, the Redstone Arsenal is just one of many Army posts with a growing backlog of maintenance and repair needs. The \$2.6 million going into the gymnasium expansion would more than pay for the \$1.5 million in overdue work at Redstone.

Mid-level Army officials in Washington and at Redstone said there is a need for an expanded gymnasium, but the fact remains that when final decisions were made at higher levels in the Pentagon about which military construction projects deserved funding in 1995, this one was left on the cutting-room floor.

Thanks to Congress' careful bookkeeping, all add-on projects—from dining halls to pistol shooting ranges to National Guard armories—are listed, state by state, in the various defense budget reports. That makes it easy to follow the trail of add-on pork to individual senators, who represent entire states. It's a bit more difficult to determine the culpability of House members, however, since the construction projects aren't listed by legislative district. Make no mistake, though, what one former Capitol Hill staffer called the "Senate Pork-O-Rama" has its equivalent on the House side.

What do the books show? For the fiscal 1995 defense budget, the Senate Armed Services Committee recommended a net addition of \$298.3 million worth of military construction projects. These add-on projects were not included in the Pentagon's original request for \$8.3 billion in military construction funds. The House Armed Services Committee,

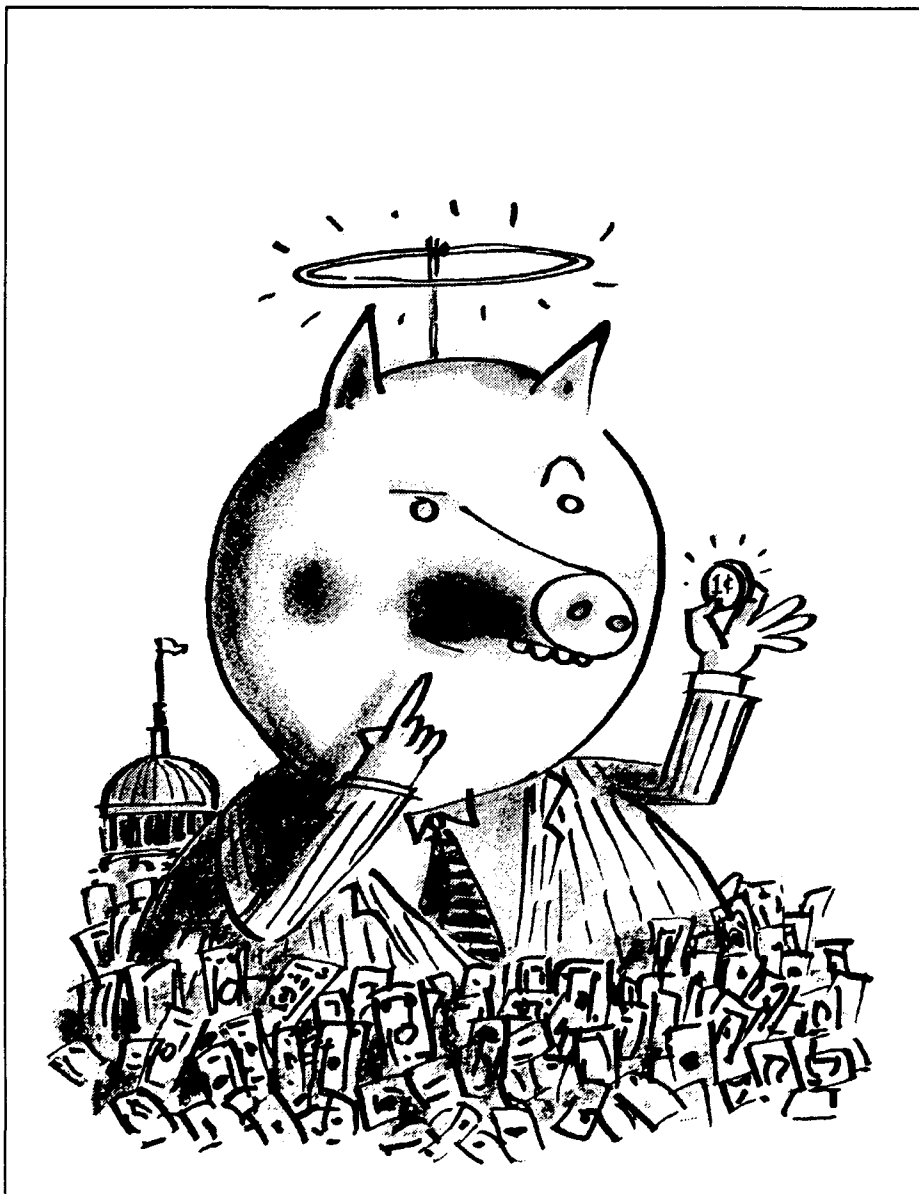
working separately, recommended an extra \$386 million in unrequested military construction projects.

There will be no attempt made here to evaluate the worthiness of specific add-on projects, nor to question Congress' legitimate power—vested in the Constitution—to modify the executive branch's budget requests as it sees fit. After all, if lawmakers simply rubber-stamped the Pentagon's construction requests, they wouldn't be doing their job. But much of the add-on spending inserted by Congress has the distinct odor of pork. A suspiciously large number of the construction projects just happen to be located in the home states of senators who sit on the armed services committee, which has primary control over the defense budget.

Of the \$298.3 million in net spending that the armed services committee added to the defense authorization bill, \$271.3 million went to projects in the home states of committee members. Shrewdly, the armed services committee made its pork-laden proposal more palatable to the appropriations committee—which has the last word on the defense budget and traditionally has been more tight-fisted—by doling out a net \$93.7 million in add-on projects to states represented by appropriations committee members.

Of course, the \$271.3 million funneled to the states of armed services members plus the \$93.7 million used to pacify the appropriations committee adds up to a sum greater than \$298.3 million in net additions to the construction account. Remember, since this is a net figure, it also reflects projects that were subtracted from the military construction—meaning there were losers in the pork-o-rama as well. Sure enough, senators who sat on neither key committee fared poorly in the pork-o-rama. The 14 states without representatives on either committee—including big recipients of weapons contracts like California—lost a net \$66.8 million in military construction projects that the military service requested.

So who were the winners and losers in this year's pork-o-rama? The biggest winner was Sen. Mitch McConnell (R-KY), a member of the appropriations committee's military construction subcommittee. His state garnered more than \$42 million in brick and mortar goodies that the Pentagon somehow forgot to include in



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its budget request. McConnell, recall, condemned Clinton's crime package as "congressional pork barreling at its worst." Honorable mentions in the pork-o-rama go to Sens. Strom Thurmond (R-SC), Jeff Bingaman (D-NM) and John Glenn (D-OH), whose states each received more than \$30 million in add-on projects.

Some of the biggest losers in the Senate's pork-o-rama were rookie California Democrats Dianne Feinstein and Barbara Boxer, neither of whom sit on the two key committees. California received only \$10.5 million in add-on construction projects—a puny counterweight to all the other defense spending that California has lost.

Of course, the blessings of the Senate Armed Services and Appropriations Committees aren't necessarily sufficient for an add-on construction project to gain final approval from both houses of Congress. The projects must also survive a final run through conference committee, where any differ-

ences between Senate and House budget bills are resolved. What does the August 12 final report of the conference committee show? Mainly, that most of the Senate's add-on projects made it through unscathed. Of the 134 projects that the armed services committee added to the Pentagon's initial 1995 budget request, 103 were approved, wholly or in part, by the conference committee. Notably, 19 of the 31 add-on projects rejected by the conference committee—or roughly 60 percent—were located in states *not* represented by senators on the armed services committee.

Altogether, as noted above, the conference committee fattened the fiscal 1995 defense bill with \$515 million in add-on construction projects. Since the total 1995 defense bill of some \$260 billion was increased in conference by just \$244 million—a sum less than the \$515 million added for military construction projects—clearly the money had to come from some other part of the defense budget. And, sure enough, if we turn to that part of the conference report dealing with the Operations and Maintenance (O&M) account, which funds spare parts and training—and as such is the pot of money most directly linked to the support of military readiness—we find a net decrease of at least \$800 million. No other major category in the defense bill suffered this kind of budget slash. It's clear, then, that Congress raided the readiness account to fund its military construction pork.

Why are unrequested gymnasiums gaining priority over military readiness? Probably for one simple reason. The legislator who fights for more O&M funds may increase the global flow of spare parts, and almost certainly improve the country's overall defense, but that achievement is invisible to the voters back home. O&M is one huge, amorphous account. The money for training and spare parts flows everywhere. All over the world, in fact. But military construction projects have a distinct identity by state. And when it comes to bringing home the bacon, the winners and losers are plainly evident. Consequently, there's a far bigger incentive to fight tooth and claw for construction projects that will provide proof back home of a legislator's efforts in Washington.

Sen. Sam Nunn (D-GA), the powerful chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, certainly is mindful of the perception that construction add-ons look an awful lot like pork. When his committee completed its mark-up of the fiscal 1995 defense budget, Nunn conceded that \$300 million had been added to military construction. But Nunn said the additions were necessary because the Pentagon had asked for \$1.1 billion less for construction than in last year's budget—a figure he considered unrealistically low. Nunn also claimed that each add-on project had to meet a set of stringent criteria: no add-on project was sited at a base earmarked for closing; every project had to fit within the budgetary constraints of the Pentagon's five-year plan; and, when money was found for a project, the military had to prove it was able to begin the project in fiscal 1995. (Of course, some critics feel this final stipulation seems an awful lot like asking the Pentagon, "If we give you the money, will

you be able to spend it?")

Nevertheless, Nunn's press secretary, Kathy O'Brien, proudly promoted the senator's guidelines. O'Brien noted that Nunn's criteria were recently embodied in a "sense of the Senate" resolution. Although the resolution is non-binding, O'Brien argued that it's the first time formal hurdles have been placed in front of add-on construction projects.

But the hurdles don't appear to be very high. Even with Nunn's criteria, it seems curious that the overwhelming majority of the add-on projects just happened to be in committee members' home states. In fact, Nunn's home state of Georgia received \$29.5 million in add-on projects for 1995. Unfortunately, Nunn's hurdles seem about as likely to interrupt the pork barrel express as a penny on a railroad track.

While endorsing Nunn's criteria, Sen. John McCain (R-AZ) fiercely attacked the add-on pork in a speech on the Senate floor. Speaking as the conference bill was being debated, McCain said, "I think the American people would be astounded to know that ... a \$260 billion expenditure ... of funds will now authorize [just] four ships and 24 fixed-wing aircraft."

"We have reached the point," he said, "where we are spending a lot of money on the wrong things."

McCain's argument is unassailable, but consider this footnote. The Senate Armed Services Committee, of which McCain is a member, added \$4.9 million for a student pilot dormitory at Luke Air Force Base in Arizona. A staff aide to McCain said her boss "had nothing to do with requesting the Luke dormitory." Indeed, a spokesman for Sen. Dennis DeConcini (D-AZ) declared proudly that his boss had lobbied the armed services committee for the project. "The senator's on the appropriations committee and he wants to help his state," the spokesman said.

At least with DeConcini as the prime mover on the project, McCain doesn't seem to have been throwing stones from a glass dormitory. In fact, one can only applaud McCain—a winner of sorts in the pork-o-rama—for attacking a process that reaped rewards for his state. Indeed, since most states did not benefit from the pork-o-rama one has to wonder why their senators remained silent. Since these losing senators represent a majority in the Senate, they could have voted against this pork-laden defense bill and sent it back to the conference with instructions to carve out all the pork. This kind of signal from the Capitol would have sent a message of real change.

Instead, on September 13 the losers helped to pass the defense bill over the objections of senators like McCain. The losers, from whom nary a bleat was heard, handed the pork to the winners by a vote of 80 to 18. The box score in the Senate barnyard sure looked like sheep: 0, pigs: 1. Surely, even McCain can see the irony here. After complaining about the pork, the losers made him eat it anyway.

David Evans, a former military affairs correspondent for the *Chicago Tribune*, is the director of national defense programs at Business Executives for National Security, an organization which seeks to create a more efficient defense establishment.

POLITICS

Color blind

Will black-nationalist politics keep Chicago progressives from winning back City Hall?

By Salim Muwakkil
CHICAGO

D

uring the dark days of the first Reagan administration, the election of black progressive Harold Washington as mayor of this notoriously polarized city gave hope to the rest of the country that coalition politics had a future. But following Washington's startling death in 1987, the black electorate became mired in division and apathy. Ever since, it has struggled in vain to regain its status as a pioneer in progressive politics. The struggle now is focused on defeating Mayor Richard M. Daley in the 1995 municipal elections, but the effort thus far has been hampered by uninspired leadership and ideological intransigence. So far there's little threat to Daley's continued reign.

In cities across the country, progressive Democrats have fought to forge multira-

cial coalitions capable of winning power. But in Los Angeles, New York and elsewhere those efforts have failed. At least in Chicago, that situation would change drastically if black leaders endorsed a tactical coalition with white progressives and Latinos, the electoral combination that secured Washington's two victories. A credible candidate could reunite and reinvigorate that coalition, just as the current mayor Daley reassembled vestiges of his late father's once-formidable political machine.

David Orr is the white progressive who is widely considered to be that credible candidate. In the current climate of ethnic polarization, Orr is seen as the kind of depolarizing figure who can attract significant support from many factions of this city's divided electorate. Currently the Cook County Clerk, Orr served as president pro tempore of the city council under Washington and briefly served as mayor after his death.

He has remained true to the ideals of the Washington coalition and is seen as the symbolic leader of the city's progressive forces. Orr attracted a strong contingent of black voters in his run for clerk and generally is well-regarded in the African-American community. In addition to that, he also does well in the city's various Latino communities. And most analysts agree that he would pull at least 35 percent of the white vote.

Those numbers add up to victory. However, many members of the inchoate Washington coalition fret that black leadership will reject Orr's candidacy for reasons of race alone. Thus, they insist, the opportunity to replace the neo-liberal Daley with a truly progressive mayor will be squandered.

It's not that progressives are against a black candidate per se, but they fear that Chicago's recent history has fractured the city's black community, leaving it incapable of electing a candidate on its own. Although the city's black voters demographically are capable of electing a mayor without the support of other constituencies, such a feat would require the kind of unifying black candidate who is nowhere to be found. Thus, they argue, it's not politically prudent to place all of the progressive eggs in an exclusively black basket.

The black electorate has yet to recover from an intraracial rivalry that erupted in the wake of Washington's death. Partisans of Eugene Sawyer, the acting mayor appointed after Washington's death, and Ald. Timothy Evans split into competing camps, and those divided loyalties opened the way for Daley's victory. Prospects for the emergence of a black candidate who can extinguish those simmering resentments remain bleak. Of course, that hasn't stopped candidates from trying.

Joseph E. Gardner was the first black candidate to officially launch his campaign. Gardner, a commissioner for the

Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago and a longtime community organizer, is highly regarded by the political cognoscenti, but he has scant public recognition and even less charisma. His name had appeared consistently in a number of meetings intended to select a consensus black candidate. But Gardner announced his candidacy before the selection process was complete. That action has left a sour taste in the mouth of many involved in the effort, and they have since cooled to Gardner's campaign.

Rep. Bobby Rush (D-IL) is also expected to announce his candidacy, but he is widely seen as a stalking horse for Daley's political organization. Rush, a former official of the Illinois Black Panther Party, has established cozy relationships with the leadership of the state's Democratic Party. Thus, many pundits presume his true purpose is to divide the black vote into political irrelevance.

Richard Barnett is a respected African-American community organizer who has been challenging the city's political status quo for more than 40 years. His expertise and energy were crucial to both of Washington's mayoral victories and he is convinced that now is not the time for a black candidate. "I would prefer a black candidate just as folks like Lu Palmer and Bob Starks do, but I just don't think we have a candidate who can beat Daley," Barnett says. Palmer, head of Chicago's militant Black Independent Political Organization, is the prime mover behind the search for a black candidate. He too was instrumental in Washington's '83 victory, but he later criticized the new mayor for lacking black nationalist principles. For Palmer, there is no substitute for a black candidate in 1995. Starks is president of the Task Force for Black Political Empowerment, a loose confederation of several Chicago community groups, and he supports Gardner's candidacy.

In Barnett's considered opinion, leaders like Palmer and Starks are "more interested in pow-wow than in power." He says their dogged insistence on a black candidate is politically immature and that there's too much at stake to lose the opportunity to beat the incumbent. "The Daley administration is busily tearing down every edifice of fairness erected by Harold Washington. Do we want to beat Daley, or mount an impressive display of political symbolism?" Barnett asks.

To him the answer is plain. But to Starks, the question itself is a self-fulfilling prophecy. "When you frame the question like that, it assumes that a black candidate can't win," Starks says. "I think that's a faulty assumption just like those that were made before Harold Washington's campaign took off." The Washington era serves black Chicagoans much like the Bible serves its disparate disciples: it is regularly employed to justify mutually exclusive options.

Barnett argues that Orr's candidacy is one Washington would support were he able to speak from the grave. "Harold didn't get into the race until his alleged supporters could show him they had put forth some effort to register new voters and energize the community," he recalls. "We've done none of that thus far and time has run out. David Orr

is the only candidate strong enough to beat Daley."

Sheer political logic is on Barnett's side, but the political mood is not. Few black leaders in this city are willing to contest the argument that an African-American candidate must be fielded. Black nationalism is the flavor of the times. According to Michael Dawson, a professor of political science at the University of Chicago who co-authored a recent study showing unprecedented nationwide support for black nationalist goals, the situation in Chicago is echoed throughout the country.

"African-Americans are in a particularly independent state of mind these days," says Dawson, who is also the author of a newly published book, *Behind The Mule: Race, Class and African-American Politics*. "A number of factors have converged in recent years to produce an African-American community that is surprisingly supportive of black nationalist ideals." Structural economic changes have shrunk the economic pie for all Americans and increased the competition for scarcer resources. And because of the demonizing of affirmative action policies, that competition is often framed in racial terms. White Americans clearly are less supportive of policies designed to ensure racial justice. Mainstream America's seeming lack of concern for the African-American community—especially at a time of acute crisis—is providing much of the fuel for this black nationalist backlash.

The absence of a viable, race-transcendent ideology is also feeding the growth of nationalist politics. With the discrediting of Marxism—along with its various offshoots within the African diaspora—and the widespread disenchantment with the interracial ideals that inspired the civil rights movement, race-based ideologies are the only ones left standing.

Dawson points to a number of instances that illustrate the new black nationalist mood, especially to the surprising electoral support among mainstream African-Americans for candidates with nationalist-influenced platforms such as New York's Rev. Al Sharpton and Washington, D.C.'s Marion Barry. Take Barry's case, for example; the former mayor of Washington, D.C., was videotaped smoking crack cocaine in an adulterous rendezvous four years ago. He served six months in jail, but emerged to win a seat on the city council and, most recently, to triumph in Washington's Democratic mayoral primary. A survey conducted by the *Washington Post* following Barry's victory in the September 13 primary found that "eight out of 10 black residents responding to the survey said they were confident that Barry would be good for the city and virtually the same proportion of white residents said he would be bad for the city." The survey found that "white and black people can look at the same man and see a different person."

This growing polarization is a troubling, even alarming, development that threatens to rip apart the nation's civic fabric. In Chicago, it has already poisoned the political atmosphere against coalition politics, and virtually assured the continuation of the Daley dynasty.

I N T H E A R T S

Outside shot

B

asketball, family, race and the American dream. No, it's not Ken Burns' next project. It's something so improbable and so good that it could shake your comfortable cynicism.

Hoop Dreams—the nearly three-hour documentary that became the hit of the Sundance Film Festival, the smash closer of the New York Film Festival, the spawner of a book and fiction feature film—is enough to restore your faith in independent filmmaking as a window on the American cultures we don't see “at the movies.”

Producers Steve James, Peter Gilbert and Frederick Marx, working with executive producer Gordon Quinn of Chicago's venerable documentary house, Kartemquin Films, found two promising young black athletes on the street courts in Chicago. Over four and a half years, they followed

Arthur Agee and William Gates through high school and into their first year at college on athletic scholarships.

The thickly textured epic that emerges has a story line that couldn't be tighter if it were scripted. Arthur, lithe and sassy, and William, big and shy, start out together at St. Joseph High School—Isiah Thomas' old alma mater. Arthur, seen as less talented, can't afford to stay at St. Joe's with a partial scholarship, and gets bumped back to a grim public school. Meanwhile, his parents split up, his dad loses his job and starts to deal drugs. William wings along, even excelling in academics, urged on by his brother Curtis, himself once a basketball star and now a security guard. Then his knee goes out, and he undergoes surgery to get back in the game.

The two boys' basketball careers over the next two years—full of amazing upsets and heart-stopping action—are almost unbearably suspenseful, because each contest is more than just a game. The boys, and much more so their families, pin whatever hopes they have on athletic success. When William

loses a game, Curtis is not just chagrined but devastated. When Arthur's father gets himself off drugs and comes back to church and family, his son's success is at the center of his new life.

You can see the dark side of victory on the faces of the boys' mothers on the day they head off to college. Both are proud but anxious too, worried about their sons' ability to handle the challenges ahead.

You can look at *Hoop Dreams* as a movie that shows how amateur athletics exploits young kids for the benefit of professional sports. Or you can see it as a great family film—one that explores the struggle of working-class black families aspiring to the American dream. Watching them battle through their lives is at once inspiring and alarming. Their ability to endure, and even to hope, taxes credulity—and yet this is all real life. You have to wonder where the breaking point is, for them and so many others.

The urgency of this struggle is made plain by the film's highly crafted use of cinéma vérité techniques. The saga of these kids, though emblematic of basic social conflicts in American culture, is also a story of these two particular people and their families. The vérité

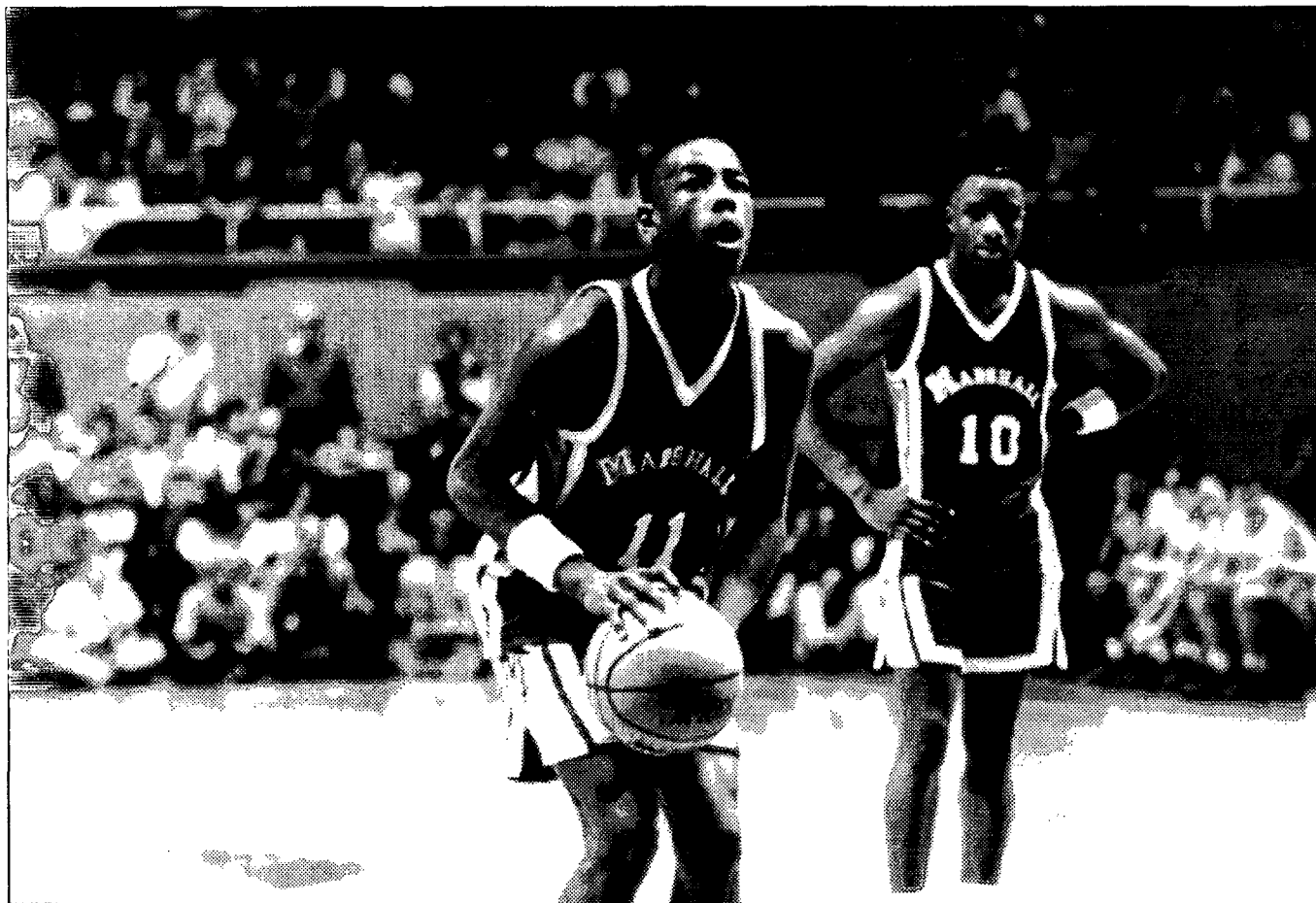


Hoop Dreams
Director Steve James
with co-producers
Frederick Marx and
Peter Gilbert

*Even as it
shakes your
faith in
amateur
athletics,
Hoop Dreams
will restore
your faith in
independent
filmmaking.*

By Pat Aufderheide

PHOTOS © M.B. CREIGER / FINE LINE



style provides a wealth of information—clothing, decor, casual gestures, the unexpected remark, the action in the background—that we depend on in daily life to form what we call intuition.

But daily life is inchoate. The meaning of it always eludes us because we're too busy living the story to retell it. It takes an artist to make somebody else's daily life meaningful to us. That's the kind of work Kartemquin Films has been known for over the last 25 years, in which such *vérité*-style documentaries as *The Chicago Maternity Center Story*, *The Last Pullman Car* and *Golub* have emerged to controversy and acclaim. And so it's not surprising that James, Gilbert and Marx found a natural home for their project at Kartemquin with Quinn. His career-long commitment to making public the drama of daily life was critical in shaping the project and then keeping it on course over the years. But, James notes, they still had to grow into the *vérité* style, as the first part of the film itself shows in its dependence on interviews rather than lived moments.

It also was not clear for the first two years what the film would be about—until the boys' on-court careers started going awry in their junior year. At first, the two athletes believed that the filmmakers would lose interest in them once the ugly prospect of failure loomed. When the filmmakers stuck with them, the boys and their families began to become friends of the filmmakers. Meanwhile, St. Paul

public TV station KTCA had become convinced of the project's interest, and became a co-producer and an important guarantor during the long years of *Hoop Dreams*' maturation.

Hoop Dreams' big splash leaves most of the participants better off than they ever hoped. The big exceptions, ironically, are the film's subjects. The National Collegiate Athletic Association prohibits them or their families from benefiting financially from the film in any way—on pain of losing their scholarships. The *Hoop Dreams* team is working hard to win a waiver of the rules, which clearly were not designed for this rarest of surprise successes.

Will *Hoop Dreams*, now debuting in commercial theaters in selected cities, buck the fate of most documentaries? After all, the form is cursed with an image so dowdy that the filmmakers joke about remaking their documentary as a feature film called "*Hoop Dreams: The Movie*." But the film's superb craftsmanship of scene and narrative, combined with the instant appeal of family drama and basketball, ought to boost it out of the documentary's usual fate.

And once there, audiences will be as engaged by the usually unmentionable tensions of race and class as by the poignancy of the stories the movie tells. *Hoop Dreams* is about people who keep refusing to accept that they are living an American tragedy.

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I N P R I N T

The new, improved Nixon

By Leo P. Ribuffo

Presidents have become so peripheral to the main currents of our historiography that a leap of imagination is required to understand that a mere 20 years ago they were at the center of what most American historians studied. Nowhere is the change more evident than on the left. From the late '50s to the mid-'70s, William Appleman Williams, Gabriel Kolko, Barton Bernstein and other "revisionists" re-evaluated presidents from the Progressive era onward. From their perspective, Theodore Roosevelt, Woodrow Wilson, Herbert Hoover and Franklin Roosevelt had more in common than met the eye, sharing a common ideology of "corporate liberalism" that transcended many of their differences. The revisionists not only rejected the automatic celebration of modern liberalism but also, at a deeper level, repudiated the prevailing habit of categorizing all presidents as simply "good" or "bad." Joan Hoff contributed to this debate with her thoughtful 1975 book, *Herbert Hoover: Forgotten Progressive*.

For the past two decades, though, all but a handful of left-of-center scholars have ignored presidents, instead celebrating those outsiders who came no closer to the Oval Office than picket lines on Pennsylvania Avenue. In general, the study of presidents—especially contemporary presidents—has sunk back into the pre-'60s morass. Political scientists innocent of archival research offer sweeping and often opaque theories of "the presidency." And biographers recount presidential lives with maximum attention to anecdote and minimum attention to social and cultural context. The shrewdest biographers show that recent presidents were neither better nor worse but inevitably more complicated than the prevailing opinion about them when they held office.

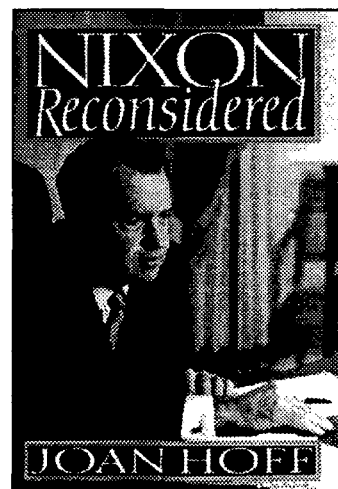
Even before Richard Nixon was buried with honor earlier this year, his reputation had received a boost from the generosity of several able biographers, notably Tom Wicker,

Herbert Parmet and Stephen Ambrose. No one can now deny that Nixon was smart, politically flexible and psychologically complex. More problematic, but nonetheless plausible, is the suggestion that under different historical circumstances he might have governed as a responsible conservative, in the fashion of his mentor Dwight Eisenhower.

In *Nixon Reconsidered*, Joan Hoff pushes the case for Nixon as responsible conservative further than any of her scholarly predecessors. She suggests an interpretation of Nixon far removed from that of popular perceptions. Instead of reflexively condemning the Watergate scandal, applauding Nixon's diplomacy and ignoring his domestic record, she suggests, we should consider Watergate in the context of other Cold War abuses, make a more balanced assessment of his foreign policy and laud him as a domestic reformer.

On the domestic scene, Hoff argues, Nixon's administration began an "unprecedented" reorganization of the executive branch, created a sensible program of revenue sharing with states and cities, expanded Social Security benefits, treated Native Americans with atypical fairness, appointed more high-ranking women than his predecessors, established the Environmental Protection Agency, ultimately named moderate Supreme Court justices, supervised school desegregation in the South and sponsored the Philadelphia Plan to aid minority businesses. The record would look even better if "liberal spoilers" had not combined with conservatives to defeat his Family Assistance Plan.

Hoff rightly sees Nixon, not Henry Kissinger, as the primary architect of administration foreign policy, and recognizes that Melvin Laird and George Shultz played major supporting roles in the drama. After pointing to the administration's "genuinely innovative grand design," she doesn't find much to applaud. Rather, she details Kissinger's futile Mideast diplomacy, doubts the long-term benefits of detente with the Soviet Union and rapprochement with the People's Republic of China, and condemns covert intervention in Chile as well as the brutal "tilt" toward Pakistan during the 1971 war with India. Similarly, Nixon widened the war in Indochina before accepting in 1973 an "unworkable" truce he could have



Nixon Reconsidered

By Joan Hoff

Basic Books

475 pp., \$30.00



negotiated in 1969.

The polarization caused by the Vietnam War provides the essential backdrop for Hoff's interpretation of Watergate. She reviews the major theories purporting to explain why Nixon's associates broke into the Democratic National Committee headquarters and leans toward the most dubious explanation, that White House counsel John Dean was trying to find out what the Democrats knew about his fiancée's connection to a prostitution ring. Fortunately, Hoff's conclusions do not rest on the whos and whys of the break-in itself. Rather, she places Watergate in

the context of the civil liberties abuses that had accompanied the Cold War from the outset, the "wartime mentality" of the late '60s and early '70s, and Nixon's "paranoid" reaction to liberal and radical opposition.

Nixon Reconsidered is filled with (often conflicting) moral judgments, but nowhere are the incongruities more evident than in Hoff's treatment of the Watergate scandal. Ultimately she calls down a plague on all houses. She shows that the president's enthusiasm for secret taps, bugs and bombings began long before the Watergate cover-up. But she also presents the president as a victim, fending off attacks from (usually unspecified) "Nixon haters" in the media and among academic elites.

Even readers enraged by Hoff's empathy for Nixon should respect her effort. Not only has Hoff dug deeply into the immense archival record, but she has also added significantly to the open files with her own Freedom of Information Act requests. *Nixon Reconsidered* offers fresh material on executive reorganization, the bombing of Cambodia, and Mideast and arms control negotiations. Hoff appreciates the limits of oral history and understands that Nixon's bizarre private ruminations are no more definitive as evidence than Harry Truman's or Lyndon Johnson's.

Nonetheless, *Nixon Reconsidered* is a problematic and sometimes peculiar book. Hoff yields to two temptations facing all early revisionist students of modern presidents.

She pays too much attention to political science theories of "the presidency" and exaggerates the significance of memoranda that she alone has seen. At times, her enthusiasm for insider detail distracts her from the political and symbolic roles presidents play. For example, although manuscript sources document the administration's implementation of school desegregation, this action hardly makes Nixon a champion of civil rights. It was Nixon, after all, who in the electoral arena carefully exploited racial prejudice to build a "new Republican majority."

Hoff praises Nixon for the good things that happened on his watch, even when he was personally uninvolved or simply responding to congressional pressure. The bad things she blames on loose cannons on the staff (John Dean, Henry Kissinger and others). While Nixon usually receives the benefit of the doubt in domestic affairs, his opponents are variously "heavy-handed" (as she describes Watergate Judge John Sirica) and "manic" (the usually unspecified elite intellectuals). The oddest aspect of *Nixon Reconsidered* is that this veteran historian is shocked—shocked!—that the president's adversaries often played politics. Instead of "coldly" analyzing Nixon's record, as she promises at the onset, she provides an incongruous mix of political science jargon and *ex cathedra* moral judgments. *Nixon Reconsidered* would have been a better book if Hoff had retained the detachment of her earlier work.

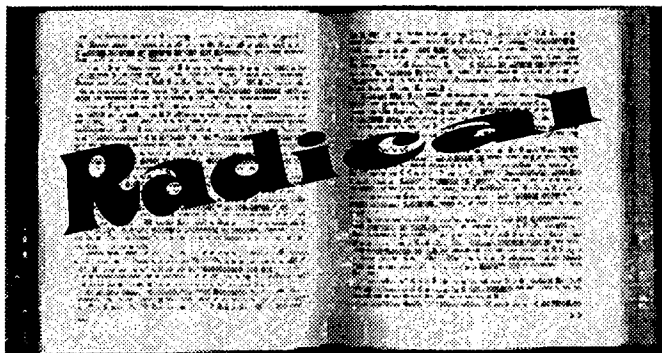
Why didn't she? One problem may be that the case for Nixon as a domestic reformer has been made before—by Wicker, Parnet and Ambrose, among others. Perhaps, too, she feels guilty for having pilloried Nixon in the past, and feels she must do penance for earlier exaggerations.

If Hoff had viewed Nixon's presidency from above the battle, she might have been less perplexed by his "erratic pattern of progressive and reactionary policies." She could have shown that Nixon and John Kennedy had more in common than met the casual eye. And Nixon could have been placed in the line of succession from two of his favorite presidents, Theodore Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson. Nixon revealed much about himself when he frequently quoted Roosevelt's declaration that real men fought things out "in the arena" instead of watching passively from the stands. Roosevelt's recommendation for riding out an age of reform would have been equally apt for Nixon. "How I wish I wasn't a reformer. ... But I suppose I must live up to my part," TR wrote one conservative senator.

Without much sense of contradiction, Roosevelt and Wilson combined reform, repression and intervention abroad. Nor were they alone among the old progressives, forgotten and otherwise, in managing this combination. Fittingly enough, J. Edgar Hoover made his first list of alleged subversives during Wilson's administration and his last during Nixon's.

Leo P. Ribuffo, a professor of history at George Washington University, is the author of *Right Center Left: Essays in American History* (Rutgers University Press). He is at work on a history of the Carter administration.

SPEED READING



The American Radical

Edited by Mari Jo Buhle, Paul Buhle & Harvey J. Kaye
Routledge
380 pp., \$17.95

In the education of a young radical, so much depends on finding the right book at the right time. And with all due respect to the power of ideas or passionate writing, the most effective "radicalizing" books are probably the ones that tell stories. Reading *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* or Kirkpatrick Sale's *SDS* at a certain age may change the map of the world inside one's head forever. Narratives can fire the imagination, and channel rebellious energies into a meaningful design, in ways no manifesto ever could.

With nearly four dozen biographical sketches covering more than 200 years of American resistance, *The American Radical* may be the single most dangerous and fascinating recent book a curious young radical could discover. Each profile is seven to 10 pages long, followed by a brief, well-selected bibliography pointing the reader to longer studies. There is a useful glossary explaining terms like "McCarthyism" and "Moscow Trials." Very seldom do the contributors indulge in jargon (whether leftist or academic). It is a good book to explore—and a gateway to further reading.

The editors stretch the term "radical" to include figures outside the usual range of socialist and communist political organizations. The first entry covers the Native American resistance leaders Pontiac and Neolin; the second entry is about Tom Paine, the American revolution's ultra-leftist. Walt Whitman is treated, properly enough, as a gay poet. Many of the usual suspects are here, including Eugene Debs, Mother Jones and Malcolm X. But it is good to see brief, accessible introductions to Communist leader William Z. Foster, pacifist Dorothy Day and W.E.B. Du Bois—the first Marxist to appear on a U.S. postage stamp.

In an effort to include environmentalists, the editors have bent over backwards. As a pioneer of radical ecology, John Muir certainly belongs here—but only a Reagan administration official would count Rachel Carson as a radical. Lewis Mumford was an important social critic and urban historian, but his credentials as a radical are less than self-evident.

Yet it is a virtue of *The American Radical* that it ranges so far beyond the narrower scope of most short surveys of the left. Radicalism violates the boundaries between politics and culture; it thrives not by newspapers and demonstrations alone. The editors show a slight (and I think wholly commendable) bias in favor of artists and writers: entries cover not only Edward Bellamy and Clifford Odets but also Isadora Duncan and Paul Robeson.

Marxists and anarchists, feminists and utopians, reformists and revolutionaries—a whole gallery of figures is assembled here, their portraits done in striking miniatures. Nothing in the book or on its jacket suggests *The American Radical* is intended strictly for young people; and even readers generally knowledgeable about left history are bound to find something new and interesting here. Yet no doubt someone will pick it up in their high school library or college bookstore and not put it down until they catch a glimpse of possibilities Rush Limbaugh and Bob Dole had rather they never imagine.

—Scott McLemee

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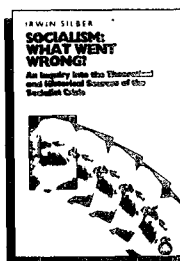
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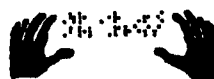
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Continued from page 40

civil disobedience that could prove to be the online equivalent of Rosa Parks' refusal to give up her seat on the bus?

Well, no. I spent an hour wandering from room to room, searching as desperately for signs of civil disobedience as the hormone-impaired inhabitants of the "Teen Chat" rooms were for girls. I'm not sure if I found any. I discovered one user shouting incoherent curses at the inhabitants of "Game Parlor Too." And what seemed to be group sex in room "Thirtysomething 1"—in strict violation of AOL's explicit anti-sex rules. Perhaps this was the civil disobedience I had been promised. Or perhaps it was nothing more than the normal shenanigans of AOL users driven to the edge by the relentless banality of the online chatter.

For the most part, though, the calm surface of AOL's chatrooms went undisturbed. I discovered flirts in the Flirts Nook, gamers in the Game Parlors, Teen Chatters gamely exchanging vital statistics real and invented—all (sigh) as it should be. And in "Star Fleet Academy" the users continued their role-playing game with a remarkable degree of serenity and seriousness.

Cpt Heat: Mr Turtless I gave no order to Increase Speed.

Return to Warp 5

TURTLESSSS : yes sir, warp 5

Cpt Heat: Tactical...Any readings on the Probes?

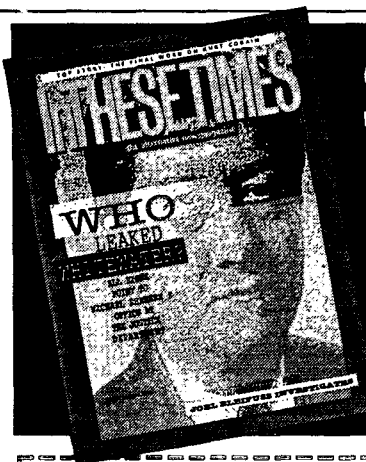
LOKII: Automapping sequence ready, sir

But why should I have expected more? For civil disobedience to be more than mere rudeness, it needs to be motivated by something beyond simple contempt—it needs (sorry to get so preachy about it) to be animated by an expansive vision of human possibility. If anything, the aol.suckers have a more constricted, less democratic, vision of cyberspace than the inhabitants of AOL's chat rooms. Like their supposed enemies, they've arrived online in search of companionship, of community. But rather than making an effort to engage with the newcomers to the Net, they've settled back to the more comfortable confines of clique. Like the AOL chatrooms, alt.aol-sucks offers only a poor parody of real human interaction. Hell, you don't need a modem for that. ◀

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I N T H E E N D

In with the Internet crowd

By David Futrelle

Traditionally, those who've trolled the vast reaches of what the magazines like to call cyberspace have done so through the Internet, a bizarrely anarchic (and distinctly user-unfriendly) conglomeration of computer networks. To navigate the Internet, one has to be able to make sense of things with names like TCP/IP and Listserv and Anonymous FTP. If you don't know what any of these things are, *don't ask*. No one is more hated by the initiates than the new user—or “newbie,” in Netspeak—who shamelessly admits his ignorance to the world. The Internet is the ultimate revenge of the nerds.

And so the old hands of the Internet don't look too charitably on the commercial services—CompuServe, Prodigy, America Online—that have sprouted up in recent years as an alternative of sorts to the Net. The services provide, as it were, full-scale simulations of the Net, with many of the same features—from discussion groups (“news-groups”) to e-mail to libraries of downloadable files.

The services lack some of the variety of the “real” Net—to which they offer at best only limited access—and all of its anarchic charm. But they're clean and simple and convenient—the McDonald's of cyberspace. The most ostentatiously user-friendly of the services (and, not coincidentally, the fastest-growing) is America Online (AOL), with cute, cartoony graphics and easily accessible help everywhere you turn.

It's hardly surprising, then, that AOL is also the service most hated by the Internet regulars—so much so that there is now a newsgroup on the Internet devoted entirely to attacks on AOL and its users. The regular contributors to the group (called,

appropriately enough, “alt.aol-sucks”) are masters of the art of “flaming”—the Net term for heaping abuse on those who have violated the unwritten codes of Netiquette. The flames range from the sophomoric (“How many AOLusers to skrew in a lightbulb? 3. One to screw it in and 2 to say “Duh??? watz a litebolb?”) to the slightly less sophomoric (“Zounds, Captain. He knows not what sarcasm is. He must have his head shoved too far up his rectal orifice to have a sense of humor”). No subject is too petty to argue over, and the contributors take each other on with the same energy they apply to the dreaded AOL. I recently ran across a half-dozen messages (“posts”) devoted to a vitriolic debate over whether or not the term “Internet” should be capitalized. I forget who won. The flammers clearly have a great deal of time on their hands.

I followed alt.aol-sucks avidly for a time—after all, AOL *does* suck, in so many, many ways. But then the novelty began to wear off, as it became more and more clear to me that the only purpose of the group was to let Net veterans (and would-be veterans) pick on hapless AOL newbies. Then, just as I was about to give up on the group entirely, I noticed a cryptic message tacked on to one of the posts. “Freedom of Speech Online civil disobedience,” the note said. “AOL chat rooms. Oct. 13 9:00 PM—EST.” The aol.suckers, in short, were going straight to the heart of the beast. I made plans to be there when they arrived.

They picked the right party to crash. Nothing about America Online sucks quite as much as its chatrooms, where, every evening, hundreds of lonely Americans take part in what one might call an online experimental absurdist drama. The chat rooms (which have names like “Best L'il Chathouse” and “The Flirts Nook”) are always filled to the brim, each room supporting nearly two dozen inhabitants who have nothing more in common than a modem and nothing to do. Needless to say, the discussion can be a bit disjointed:

PamBFISH: I'm from Minnesota, it was a nice fall day today
Flybyknight: E=mc^2
BobS424833: I still here Sarah
NascarJohn: we are speaking in Portuguese

On October 13, at the appointed time, I signed on expectantly. Was I about to witness a bold existential protest of AOL's stupefying sterility—a defiant protest of postmodern existence itself? Was I to be present at the creation of a new form of political action, a kind of

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